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# THE MAN IN THE STREET

## PAPERS ON AMERICAN TOPICS

BY

MEREDITH NICHOLSON

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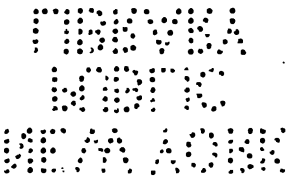

# *FOREWORD*

My right to speak for the man in the street, the average American, is, I am aware, open to serious question. Possibly there are amiable persons who, if urged to pass judgment, would appraise me a trifle higher than the average; others, I am painfully aware, would rate me much lower. The point is, of course, one about which I am not entitled to an opinion. I offer no apology for the apparent unrelated character of the subjects herein discussed, for to my mind the volume has a certain cohesion. In that part of America with which I am most familiar, literature, politics, religion, and the changing social scene are all of a piece. We disport ourselves in one field as blithely as in another. Within a few blocks of this room, on the fifteenth floor of an office-building in the centre of my home town, I can find men and women quite competent to answer questions pertaining to any branch of philosophy or the arts. I called a lawyer friend on the telephone only yesterday

and hummed a few bars of music that he might aid me with the correct designation of one of Beethoven's symphonies. In perplexity over an elusive quotation I can, with all confidence, plant myself on the post-office steps and some one will come along with the answer. I do not mention these matters boastfully, but merely to illustrate the happy conditions of life in the delectable province in which I was born.

The papers here collected first appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*, except "Let Main Street Alone!" which was published in the New York *Evening Post*, "The Cheerful Breakfast Table," which is reprinted from the *Yale Review*, and "The Poor Old English Language," which is reproduced from *Scribner's Magazine*. The political articles are sufficiently explained by their dates. They are reprinted without alteration in the hope that some later student of the periods scrutinized may find them of interest.

M. N.

INDIANAPOLIS,
July, 1921.

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# LET MAIN STREET ALONE!

## I

CERTAIN questions lie dormant for long periods and then, often with no apparent provocation, assume an acute phase and cry insistently for attention. The failure of the church to adjust itself to the needs of the age; the shiftlessness of the new generation; the weaknesses of our educational system—these and like matters are susceptible of endless debate. Into this general classification we may gaily sweep the query as to whether a small town is as promising a habitat for an aspiring soul as a large city. When we have wearied of defending or opposing the continuance of the direct primary, or have found ourselves suddenly conscious that the attempt to decide whether immortality is desirable is unprofitable, we may address ourselves valiantly to a discussion of the advantages of the provinces over those of the seething metropolis, or take

the other way round, as pleases our humor. Without the recurring stimulus of such contentions as these we should probably be driven to the peddling of petty gossip or sink into a state of intellectual coma.

There are encouraging signs that we of this Republic are much less impatient under criticism than we used to be, or possibly we are becoming more callous. Still I think it may be said honestly that we have reached a point where we are measurably disposed to see American life steadily and see it whole. It is the seeing it whole that is the continuing difficulty. We have been reminded frequently that our life is so varied that the great American novel must inevitably be the work of many hands, it being impossible for one writer to present more than one phase or describe more than one geographical section. This is "old stuff," and nothing that need keep us awake o' nights. One of these days some daring hand capable of wielding a broad brush will paint a big picture, but meanwhile we are not so badly served by those fictionists who turn up their little spadefuls of earth and clap a microscope upon it. Such

novels as *Miss Lulu Bett* and *Main Street* or such a play as Mr. Frank Craven's *The First Year*, to take recent examples, encourage the hope that after all we are not afraid to look at ourselves when the mirror is held before us by a steady hand.

A serious novel that cuts close to the quick can hardly fail to disclose one of our most amusing weaknesses—our deeply ingrained local pride that makes us extremely sensitive to criticism in any form of our own bailiwick. The nation may be assailed and we are philosophical about it; but if our home town is peppered with bird shot by some impious huntsman we are at once ready for battle. We do like to brag of our own particular Main Street! It is in the blood of the provincial American to think himself more happily situated and of a higher type than the citizens of any other province. In journeys across the continent, I have sometimes thought that there must be a definite line where bragging begins. I should fix it somewhere west of Pittsburgh, attaining its maximum of innocent complacency in Indiana, diminishing through Iowa and Nebraska, though ranging high in Kan-

sas and Colorado and there gathering fresh power for a dash to the coast, where stout Cortez and all his men would indeed look at each other with a mild surmise to hear the children of the Pacific boast of their landscape and their climate, and the kindly fruits of their soil.

When I travel beyond my State's boundaries I more or less consciously look for proof of Indiana's superiority. Where I fail to find it I am not without my explanations and excuses. If I should be kidnapped and set down blindfolded in the midst of Ohio on a rainy night, I should know, I am sure, that I was on alien soil. I frequently cross Iowa, Kansas, and Nebraska, and never without a sense of a change of atmosphere in passing from one to the other. Kansas, from territorial days, has been much more strenuously advertised than Nebraska. The very name Kansas is richer in its connotations. To think of it is to recall instantly the days of border warfare; John Brown of Osawatomie, the New England infusion, the Civil War soldiers who established themselves on the free soil after Appomattox; grasshoppers and the days of famine; populism and the Sockless

Socrates of Medicine Lodge, the brilliant, satiric Ingalls, Howe's *Story of a Country Town*, William Allen White of Emporia, and *A Certain Rich Man*, down to and including the present governor, the Honorable Henry J. Allen, beyond question the most beguiling man to sit at meat with in all America.

## II

A lady with whom I frequently exchange opinions on the trolley-cars of my town took me to task recently for commending Mr. Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street* as an achievement worthy of all respect. "I know a score of Indiana towns and they are not like Gopher Prairie," she declared indignantly. "No," I conceded, "they are not; but the Indiana towns you have in mind are older than Gopher Prairie; many of them have celebrated their centennial; they were founded by well-seasoned pioneers of the old American stocks; and an impressive number of the first settlers—I named half a dozen—experienced the same dismay and disgust, and were inspired by the same noble

ambition to make the world over that Mr. Lewis has noted in Carol Kennicott's case."

Not one but many of my neighbors, and friends and acquaintances in other towns, have lately honored me with their views on provincial life with Mr. Lewis's novel as a text. Most of them admit that Minnesota may be like that, but by all the gods at once things are not so in "my State" or "my town." This is a habit of thought, a state of mind. There is, I think, something very delightful about it. To encounter it is to be refreshed and uplifted. It is like meeting a stranger who isn't ashamed to boast of his wife's cooking. On east and west journeys across the region of the tall corn one must be churlish indeed to repel the man who is keen to enlighten the ignorant as to the happy circumstances of his life. After an hour I experience a pleasurable sense of intimacy with his neighbors. If, when his town is reached, I step out upon the platform with the returning Ulysses, there may be time enough to shake hands with his wife and children, and I catch a glimpse of his son in the waiting motor—(that boy, I'd have you know, took all the honors of his class at our State

university)—and it is with real sorrow that I confess my inability to stop off for a day or two to inspect the grain-elevator and the new brick-yard and partake of a chicken dinner at the country club—the snappiest in all this part of the State! Main Street is proud of itself, and any newcomer who assumes a critical attitude or is swollen with a desire to retouch the lily is doomed to a chilly reception.

My joy in *Main Street*, the book, is marred by what I am constrained to think is a questionable assertion in the foreword, namely: "The town is, in our tale, called Gopher Prairie, Minnesota. But its Main Street is the continuation of Main Street everywhere. The story would be the same in Ohio or Montana, in Kansas or Kentucky or Illinois, and not very differently would it be told up York State or in the Carolina Hills." Now I should say that there are very marked differences between Gopher Prairie and towns of approximately the same size that have drawn upon different strains of foreign or American stock. Mr. Lewis depicts character with a sure stroke, and he communicates the sense of atmosphere admirably.

There are paragraphs and single lines that arrest the attention and invite re-reading, so sharply do they bite into the consciousness. One pays him a reader's highest tribute—"That's true; I've known just such people." But I should modify his claim to universality in deference to the differences in local history so clearly written upon our maps and the dissimilar backgrounds of young America that are not the less interesting or important because the tracings upon them are so thin.

Human nature, we are frequently assured, is the same the world over, but I don't believe it can be maintained successfully that all small towns are alike. All manner of things contribute to the making of a community. A college town is unlike an industrial or a farming centre of the same size. A Scandinavian influence in a community is quite different from a German or an Irish or a Scotch influence. There are places in the heart of America where, in the formative period, the Scotch-Irish exerted a very marked influence indeed in giving tone and direction to the community life, and the observer is sensible of this a hundred years afterward. There are

varied shadings traceable to early dominating religious forces; Catholicism, Methodism, Presbyterianism, and Episcopalianism each imparting a coloring of its own to the social fabric. No more fascinating field is open to the student than that offered by the elements that have contributed to the building of American communities as, for example, where there has been a strong foreign infusion or such a blend as that of New Englanders with folk of a Southern strain. Those who are curious in such matters will find a considerable literature ready to their hand. Hardly any one at all conversant with American life but will think instantly of groups of men and women who in some small centre were able, by reason of their foresight and courage, to lay a debt upon posterity, or of an individual who has waged battle alone for public betterment.

The trouble with Mr. Lewis's Carol Kennicott was that she really had nothing to offer Gopher Prairie that sensible self-respecting people anywhere would have welcomed. A superficial creature, she was without true vision in any direction. Plenty of men and women vastly her

superior in cultivation and blessed with a far finer sensitiveness to the things of the spirit have in countless cases faced rude conditions, squalor even, cheerfully and hopefully, and in time they have succeeded in doing something to make the world a better place to live in. This is not to say that Carol is not true to type; there is the type, but I am not persuaded that its existence proves anything except that there are always fools and foolish people in the world. Carol would have been a failure anywhere. She deserved to fail in Gopher Prairie, which does not strike me, after all, as so hateful a place as she found it to be. She nowhere impinges upon my sympathy. I have known her by various names in larger and lovelier communities than Gopher Prairie, and wherever she exists she is a bore, and at times an unmitigated nuisance. My heart warms, not to her, but to the people in Main Street she despised. They didn't need her uplifting hand! They were far more valuable members of society than she proved herself to be, for they worked honestly at their jobs and had, I am confident, a pretty fair idea of their rights and duties, their privileges and immunities, as children of democracy.

Nothing in America is more reassuring than the fact that some one is always wailing in the market-place. When we've got something and don't like it, we wait for some one to tell us how to get rid of it. Plunging into prohibition, we at once become tolerant of the bootlegger. There's no point of rest. We are fickle, capricious, and pine for change. In the course of time we score for civilization, but the gains, broadly considered, are small and painfully won. Happiest are they who keep sawing wood and don't expect too much! There are always the zealous laborers, the fit though few, who incur suspicion, awaken antagonism, and suffer defeat, to pave the way for those who will reap the harvest of their sowing. There are a hundred million of us and it's too much to ask that we all chase the same rainbow. There are diversities of gifts, but all, we hope, animated by the same spirit.

## III

The Main Streets I know do not strike me as a fit subject for commiseration. I refuse to be sorry for them. I am increasingly impressed by their intelligence, their praiseworthy curiosity as to things of good report, their sturdy opti-

mism, their unshakable ambition to excel other Main Streets. There is, to be sure, a type of village with a few stores, a blacksmith-shop, and a gasolene station, that seems to express the ultimate in torpor. Settlements of this sort may be found in every State, and the older the State the more complete seems to be their inertia. But where five thousand people are assembled —or better, when we deal with a metropolis of ten or twelve thousand souls—we are at once conscious of a pulse that keeps time with the world's heart-beat. There are compensations for those who abide in such places. In such towns, it is quite possible, if you are an amiable being, to know well-nigh every one. The main thoroughfare is a place of fascinations, the stage for a continuing drama. Carrier delivery destroys the old joy of meeting all the folks at the post-office, but most of the citizens, male and female, find some excuse for a daily visit to Main Street. They are bound together by dear and close ties. You've got to know your neighbors whether you want to or not, and it's well for the health of your soul to know them and be of use to them when you can.

I should regard it as a calamity to be deprived of the felicity of my occasional visits to a particular centre of enlightenment and cheer that I have in mind. An hour's journey on the trolley brings me to the court-house. After one such visit the stranger needn't trouble to enroll himself at the inn; some one is bound to offer to put him up. There is a dramatic club in that town that produces good plays with remarkable skill and effectiveness. The club is an old one as such things go, and it fixes the social standard for the community. The auditorium of the Masonic Temple serves well as a theatre, and our admiration for the club is enhanced by the disclosure that the members design the scenery and also include in their membership capable directors. After the play one may dance for an hour or two, though the cessation of the music does not mean that you are expected to go to bed. Very likely some one will furnish forth a supper and there will be people "asked in" to contribute to your entertainment.

There are in this community men and women who rank with the best talkers I have ever heard. Their neighbors are proud of them and

produce them on occasion to represent the culture, the wit and humor, of the town. Two women of this place are most discerning students of character. They tell stories with a masterly touch, and with the economy of words, the whimsical comment, the pauses and the unforeseen climaxes that distinguished the story-telling of Twain and Riley. The inhabitants make jokes about their Main Street. They poke fun at themselves as being hicks and rubes, living far from the great centres of thought, while discussing the newest books and finding, I fancy, a mischievous pleasure in casually telling you something which you, as a resident of the near-by capital with its three hundred and twenty thousand people, ought to have known before.

The value of a local literature, where it is honest, is that it preserves a record of change. It is a safe prediction that some later chronicler of Gopher Prairie will present a very different community from that revealed in *Main Street*. Casting about for an instance of a State whose history is illustrated by its literature, I pray to be forgiven if I fall

back upon Indiana. Edward Eggleston was an early, if not indeed the first, American realist. It is now the habit of many Indianians to flout the *Hoosier Schoolmaster* as a libel upon a State that struts and boasts of its culture and refuses to believe that it ever numbered ignorant or vulgar people among its inhabitants. Eggleston's case is, however, well-supported by testimony that would pass muster under the rules of evidence in any fair court of criticism. Riley, coming later, found kindlier conditions, and sketched countless types of the farm and the country town, and made painstaking studies of the common speech. His observations began with a new epoch—the return of the soldiers from the Civil War. The veracity of his work is not to be questioned; his contribution to the social history of his own Hoosier people is of the highest value. Just as Eggleston and Riley left records of their respective generations, so Mr. Tarkington, arriving opportunely to preserve unbroken the apostolic succession, depicts his own day with the effect of contributing a third panel in a series of historical paintings. Thanks to

our provincial literature, we may view many other sections through the eyes of novelists; as, the Maine of Miss Jewett, the Tennessee of Miss Murfree, the Kentucky of James Lane Allen, the Virginia of Mr. Page, Miss Johnston, and Miss Glasgow, the Louisiana of Mr. Cable. (I am sorry for the new generation that doesn't know the charm of *Old Creole Days* and *Madame Delphine!*) No doubt scores of motorists traversing Minnesota will hereafter see in every small town a Gopher Prairie, and peer at the doctors' signs in the hope of catching the name of Kennicott!

An idealism persistently struggling to implant itself in the young soil always has been manifest in the West, and the record of it is very marked in the Mississippi Valley States. Emerson had a fine appreciation of this. He left Concord frequently to brave the winter storms in what was then pretty rough country, to deliver his message and to observe the people. His philosophy seems to have been equal to his hardships. "My chief adventure," he wrote in his journal of one such pilgrimage, "was the necessity of riding in a buggy forty-

eight miles to Grand Rapids; then after lecture twenty more in return, and the next morning back to Kalamazoo in time for the train hither at twelve." Nor did small audiences disturb him. "Here is America in the making, America in the raw. But it does not want much to go to lectures, and 'tis a pity to drive it."

There is, really, something about corn—tall corn, that whispers on summer nights in what George Ade calls the black dirt country. There is something finely spiritual about corn that grows like a forest in Kansas and Nebraska. And Democracy is like unto it—the plowing, and the sowing, and the tending to keep the weeds out. We can't scratch a single acre and say all the soil's bad;—it may be wonderfully rich in the next township!

It is the way of nature to be perverse and to fashion the good and great out of the least promising clay. Country men and small-town men have preponderated in our national counsels and all things considered they haven't done so badly. Greatness has a way of unfolding itself; it remains true that the fault is in ourselves, and not in our stars, that we are underlings.

Out of one small town in Missouri came the two men who, just now, hold respectively the rank of general and admiral of our army and navy. And there is a trustworthy strength in elemental natures—in what Whitman called "powerful uneducated persons." Ancestry and environment are not negligible factors, yet if Lincoln had been born in New York and Roosevelt in a Kentucky log cabin, both would have reached the White House. In the common phrase, you can't keep a good man down. The distinguishing achievement of Drinkwater's *Lincoln* is not merely his superb realization of a great character, but the sense so happily communicated, of a wisdom deep-planted in the general heart of man. It isn't all just luck, the workings of our democracy. If there's any manifestation on earth of a divine ordering of things, it is here in America. Considering that most of the hundred million trudge along away back in the line where the music of the band reaches them only faintly, the army keeps step pretty well.

## IV

"Myself when young did eagerly frequent" lecture-halls and the abodes of the high-minded and the high-intentioned who were zealous in the cause of culture. This was in those years when Matthew Arnold's criticisms of America and democracy in general were still much discussed. Thirty years ago it really seemed that culture was not only desirable but readily attainable for America. We cherished happy illusions as to the vast possibilities of education: there should be no Main Street without its reverence for the best thought and noblest action of all time. But those of us who are able to ponder "the heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world" in the spirit of that period must reflect, a little ruefully, that the new schemes and devices of education to which we pointed with pride have not turned the trick. The machinery of enlightenment has, of course, greatly multiplied. The flag waves on innumerable schoolhouses; literature, art, music are nowhere friendless. The women of America make war ceaselessly upon

philistinism, and no one attentive to their labors can question their sincerity or their intelligence. But these are all matters as to which many hear the call but comparatively few prostrate themselves at the mercy-seat. Culture, in the sense in which we used the word, was not so easily to be conferred or imposed upon great bodies of humanity; the percentage of the mass who are seriously interested in the finest and noblest action of mankind has not perceptibly increased.

Odd as these statements look, now that I have set them down, I hasten to add that they stir in me no deep and poignant sorrow. My feeling about the business is akin to that of a traveller who has missed a train but consoles himself with the reflection that by changing his route a trifle he will in due course reach his destination without serious delay, and at the same time enjoy a view of unfamiliar scenery.

Between what Main Street wants and cries for and what Main Street really needs there is a considerable margin for speculation. I shall say at once that I am far less con-

cerned than I used to be as to the diffusion of culture in the Main Streets of all creation. Culture is a term much soiled by ignoble use and all but relegated to the vocabulary of cant. We cannot "wish" Plato upon resisting and hostile Main Streets; we are even finding that Isaiah and St. Paul are not so potent to conjure with as formerly. The church is not so generally the social centre of small communities as it was a little while ago. Far too many of us are less fearful of future torment than of a boost in the price of gasolene. The motor may be making pantheists of us: I don't know. Hedonism in some form may be the next phase; here, again, I have no opinion.

## V

Mr. St. John Ervine complains that we of the provinces lack individuality; that we have been so smoothed out and conform so strictly to the prevailing styles of apparel that the people in one town look exactly like those in the next. This observation may be due in some measure to the alien's preconceived ideas of

what the hapless wights who live west of the Hudson ought to look like, but there is much truth in the remark of this amiable friend from overseas. Even the Indians I have lately seen look quite comfortable in white man's garb. To a great extent the ready-to-wear industry has standardized our raiment, so that to the unsophisticated masculine eye at least the women of Main Street are indistinguishable from their sisters in the large cities. There is less slouch among the men than there used to be. Mr. Howells said many years ago that in travelling Westward the polish gradually dimmed on the shoes of the native; but the shine-parlors of the sons of Romulus and Achilles have changed all that.

I lean to the idea that it is not well for us all to be tuned to one key. I like to think that the farm folk and country town people of Georgia and Kansas, Oklahoma and Maine are thinking independently of each other about weighty matters, and that the solidarity of the nation is only the more strikingly demonstrated when, finding themselves stirred (sometimes tardily) by the national consciousness,

they act sensibly and with unity and concord. But the interurban trolley and the low-priced motor have dealt a blow to the old smug complacency and indifference. There is less tobacco-juice on the chins of our rural fellow citizens; the native flavor, the raciness and the tang so highly prized by students of local color have in many sections ceased to be. We may yet be confronted by the necessity of preserving specimens of the provincial native in social and ethnological museums.

I should like to believe that the present with its bewildering changes is only a corridor leading, politically and spiritually, toward something more splendid than we have known. We can only hope that this is true, and meanwhile adjust ourselves to the idea that a good many things once prized are gone forever. I am not sure but that a town is better advertised by enlightened sanitary ordinances duly enforced than by the number of its citizens who are acquainted with the writings of Walter Pater. A little while ago I should have looked upon such a thought as blasphemy.

The other evening, in a small college town,

I passed under the windows of a hall where a fraternity dance was in progress. I dare say the young gentlemen of the society knew no more of the Greek alphabet than the three letters inscribed over the door of their club-house. But this does not trouble me as in "the olden golden glory of the days gone by." We do not know but that in some far day a prowling New Zealander, turning up a banjo and a trap-drum amid the ruins of some American college, will account them nobler instruments than the lyre and lute.

Evolution brought us down chattering from the trees, and we have no right to assume that we are reverting to the arboreal state. This is no time to lose confidence in democracy; it is too soon to chant the recessional of the race. Much too insistently we have sought to reform, to improve, to plant the seeds of culture, to create moral perfection by act of Congress. If Main Street knows what America is all about, and bathes itself and is kind and considerate of its neighbors, why not leave the rest on the knees of the gods?

What really matters as to Main Street is

that it shall be happy. We can't, merely by taking thought, lift its people to higher levels of aspiration. Main Street is neither blind nor deaf; it knows well enough what is going on in the world; it is not to be jostled or pushed by condescending outsiders eager to bestow sweetness and light upon it. It is not unaware of the desirability of such things; and in its own fashion and at the proper time it will go after them. Meanwhile if it is cheerful and hopeful and continues to vote with reasonable sanity the rest of the world needn't despair of it. After all, it's only the remnant of Israel that can be saved. Let Main Street alone!

# JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

## I

ON a day in July, 1916, thirty-five thousand people passed under the dome of the Indiana capitol to look for the last time upon the face of James Whitcomb Riley. The best-loved citizen of the Hoosier commonwealth was dead, and laborers and mechanics in their working clothes, professional and business men, women in great numbers, and a host of children paid their tribute of respect to one whose sole claim upon their interest lay in his power to voice their feelings of happiness and grief in terms within the common understanding. The very general expressions of sorrow and affection evoked by the announcement of the poet's death encourage the belief that the lines that formed on the capitol steps might have been augmented endlessly by additions drawn from every part of America. I frankly confess that, having enjoyed his friendship through many years, I am disqualified from

passing judgment upon his writings, into much of which I inevitably read a significance that may not be apparent to those capable of appraising them with critical detachment. But Riley's personality was quite as interesting as his work, and I shall attempt to give some hint of the man as I knew him, with special reference to his whims and oddities.

My acquaintance with him dates from a memorable morning when he called on me in a law office where I copied legal documents, ran errands, and scribbled verses. At this time he was a regular contributor to the Sunday edition of the Indianapolis *Journal*—a newspaper of unusual literary quality, most hospitable to fledgling bards, who were permitted to shine in the reflected light of Riley's growing fame. Some verses of mine having been copied by a Cincinnati paper, Riley asked about me at the *Journal* office and sought me out, paper in hand, to speak a word of encouragement. He was the most interesting, as he was the most amusing and the most lovable man I have known. No one was quite like Riley, and the ways in which he suggests other men

merely call attention to the fact that he was, after all, wholly different: he was Riley!

He was the best-known figure in our capital; this was true, indeed, of the entire commonwealth that he sang into fame. He was below medium height, neatly and compactly built; fair and of ruddy complexion. He had been a tow-headed boy, and while his hair thinned in later years, any white that crept into it was scarcely perceptible. A broad flexible mouth and a big nose were the distinguishing features of a remarkably mobile face. He was very near-sighted, and the rubber-rimmed glasses he invariably wore served to obscure his noticeably large blue eyes. He was a compound of Pennsylvania Dutch and Irish, but the Celt in him was dominant: there were fairies in his blood.

In his days of health he carried himself alertly and gave an impression of smartness. He was in all ways neat and orderly; there was no slouch about him and no Byronic affectations. He was always curious as to the origin of any garment or piece of haberdashery displayed by his intimates, but strangely secretive as to the source of his own supplies. He affected

obscure tailors, probably because they were likelier to pay heed to his idiosyncrasies than more fashionable ones. He once deplored to me the lack of attention bestowed upon the waistcoat by sartorial artists. This was a garment he held of the highest importance in man's adornment. Hopkinson Smith, he averred, was the only man he had ever seen who displayed a satisfactory taste and was capable of realizing the finest effects in this particular.

He inspired affection by reason of his gentleness and inherent kindliness and sweetness. The idea that he was a convivial person, delighting in boon companions and prolonged sessions at table, has no basis in fact. He was a domestic, even a cloistral being; he disliked noise and large companies; he hated familiarity, and would quote approvingly what Lowell said somewhere about the annoyance of being clapped on the back. Riley's best friends never laid hands on him; I have seen strangers or new acquaintances do so to their discomfiture.

No background of poverty or early hardship can be provided for this "poet of the

people." His father was a lawyer, an orator well known in central Indiana, and Riley's boyhood was spent in comfortable circumstances. The curtailment of his schooling was not enforced by necessity, but was due to his impatience of restraint and inability to adjust his own interests to the prevailing curriculum. He spent some time in his father's office at Greenfield, reading general literature, not law, and experimenting with verse. He served an apprenticeship as a house painter, and acquired the art of "marbling" and "graining"—long-abandoned embellishments of domestic architecture. Then, with four other young men, he began touring Indiana, painting signs, and, from all accounts, adding greatly to the gaiety of life in the communities visited. To advertise their presence, Riley would recite in the market-place, or join with his comrades in giving musical entertainments. Or, pretending to be blind, he would laboriously climb up on a scaffolding and before the amazed spectators execute a sign in his best style. There was a time when he seemed anxious to forget his early experiences as a wandering sign-

painter and entertainer with a patent-medicine van, but in his last years he spoke of them quite frankly.

He had a natural talent for drawing; in fact, in his younger days he dabbled in most of the arts. He discoursed to me at length on one occasion of musical instruments, about all of which he seemed to have much curious lore. He had been able to play more or less successfully upon the violin, the banjo, the guitar, and (his humor bubbling) the snare and bass drum! "There's nothing," he said, "so much fun as thumping a bass drum," an instrument on which he had performed in the Greenfield band. "To throw your legs over the tail of a band wagon and thump away—there's nothing like it!" As usual when the reminiscent mood was upon him, he broadened the field of the discussion to include strange characters he had known among rural musicians, and these were of endless variety. He had known a man who was passionately fond of the bass-drum and who played solos upon it—"Sacred music"! Sometimes the neighbors would borrow the drum, and he pictured the man's chagrin when

after a hard day's work he went home and found his favorite instrument gone.

Riley acquired various mechanical devices for creating music and devoted himself to them with childish delight. In one of his gay moods he would instruct a visitor in the art of pumping his player-piano, and, having inserted a favorite "roll," would dance about the room snapping his fingers in time to the music.

## II

Riley's reading was marked by the casualness that was part of his nature. He liked small books that fitted comfortably into the hand, and he brought to the mere opening of a volume and the cutting of leaves a deliberation eloquent of all respect for the contents. Always a man of surprises, in nothing was he more surprising than in the wide range of his reading. It was never safe to assume that he was unacquainted with some book which might appear to be foreign to his tastes. His literary judgments were sound, though his prejudices (always amusing and frequently unaccountable) occasionally led him astray.

While his study of literature had followed the haphazard course inevitable in one so uninfluenced by formal schooling, it may fairly be said that he knew all that it was important for him to know of books. He was of those for whom life and letters are of one piece and inseparable. In a broad sense he was a humanist. What he missed in literature he acquired from life. Shakespeare he had absorbed early; Herrick, Keats, Tennyson, and Longfellow were deep-planted in his memory. His excursions into history had been the slightest; biographies and essays interested him much more, and he was constantly on the lookout for new poets. No new volume of verse, no striking poem in a periodical escaped his watchful eye.

He professed to believe that Mrs. Browning was a poet greatly superior to her husband. Nevertheless he had read Robert Browning with some attention, for on one or two occasions he burlesqued successfully that poet's mannerisms. For some reason he manifested a marked antipathy to Poe. And in this connection it may be of interest to mention that

he was born (October 7, 1849) the day Poe died! But for Riley's cordial dislike of Poe I might be tempted to speculate upon this coincidence as suggesting a relinquishment of the singing robes by one poet in favor of another. Riley had, undoubtedly, at some time felt Poe's spell, for there are unmistakable traces of Poe's influence in some of his earlier work. Indeed, his first wide advertisement came through an imitation of Poe—a poem called "Leonanie"—palmed off as having been found written in an old schoolbook that had been Poe's property. Riley long resented any reference to this hoax, though it was a harmless enough prank—the device of a newspaper friend to prove that public neglect of Riley was not based upon any lack of merit in his writings. It was probably Poe's sombreness that Riley did not like, or possibly his personal characteristics. Still, he would close any discussion of Poe's merits as a writer by declaring that "The Raven" was clearly inspired by Mrs. Browning's "Lady Geraldine's Courtship." This is hardly susceptible of proof, and Elizabeth Barrett's gracious acceptance of the

compliment of Poe's dedication of his volume containing "The Raven" may or may not be conclusive as to her own judgment in the matter.

Whitman had no attraction for Riley; he thought him something of a charlatan. He greatly admired Stevenson and kept near at hand a rare photograph of the Scot which Mrs. Stevenson had given him. He had recognized Kipling's genius early, and his meeting with that writer in New York many years ago was one of the pleasantest and most satisfactory of all his literary encounters.

The contentions between Realism and Romanticism that occasionally enliven our periodical literature never roused his interest; his sympathies were with the conservatives and he preferred gardens that contained familiar and firmly planted literary landmarks. He knew his Dickens thoroughly, and his lifelong attention to "character" was due no doubt in some measure to his study of Dickens's portraits of the quaint and humorous. He always confessed gratefully his indebtedness to Longfellow, and once, when we were speaking of

the older poet, he remarked that Mark Twain and Bret Harte were other writers to whom he owed much. Harte's obligations to both Dickens and Longfellow are, of course, obvious and Harte's use of dialect in verse probably strengthened Riley's confidence in the Hoosier speech as a medium when he began to find himself.

His humor—both as expressed in his writings, and as we knew it who lived neighbor to him—was of the same *genre* as Mark Twain's. And it is not surprising that Mark Twain and Riley should have met on grounds of common sympathy and understanding. What the Mississippi was to the Missourian, the Old National Road that bisected Greenfield was to Riley. The larger adventure of life that made Clemens a cosmopolitan did not appeal to Riley, with his intense loyalty to the State of his birth and the city that for thirty-eight years was his home.

It gave him the greatest pleasure to send his friends books that he thought would interest them. Among those he sent me are Professor Woodberry's selections from Aubrey de Vere,

whose "Bard Ethell" Riley thought a fine performance; Bradford Torrey's *Friends on the Shelf* and, a few weeks before his death, a copy of G. K. Chesterton's poems in which he had written a substitute for one of the lines. If in these gifts he chose some volume already known to the recipient, it was well to conceal the fact, for it was essential to the perfect course of his friendships that he be taken on his own terms, and no one would have had the heart to spoil his pleasure in a "discovery."

He was most generous toward all aspirants in his own field, though for years these were prone to take advantage of his good nature by inflicting books and manuscripts upon him. I once committed the indiscretion of uttering a volume of verse, and observed with trepidation a considerable number of copies on the counter of the bookstore where we did much loafing together. A few days later I was surprised and for a moment highly edified to find the stock greatly depleted. On cautious inquiry I found that it was Riley alone who had been the investor—to the extent of seventy-five copies, which he distributed widely among

literary acquaintances. In the case of another friend who published a book without large expectations of public favor, Riley secretly purchased a hundred and scattered them broadcast. These instances are typical: he would do a kind thing furtively and evince the deepest embarrassment when detected.

It is always a matter for speculation as to just what effect a college training would have upon men of Riley's type, who, missing the inscribed portals, nevertheless find their way into the house of literature. I give my opinion for what it may be worth, that he would have been injured rather than benefited by an ampler education. He was chiefly concerned with human nature, and it was his fortune to know profoundly those definite phases and contrasts of life that were susceptible of interpretation in the art of which he was sufficiently the master. Of the general trend of society and social movements he was as unconscious as though he lived on another planet. I am disposed to think that he profited by his ignorance of such things, which left him to the peaceful contemplation of the simple phe-

nomena of life that had early attracted him. Nothing seriously disturbed his inveterate provincial habit of thought. He manifested Thoreau's indifference—without the Yankee's scorn—for the world beyond his dooryard. "I can see," he once wrote me, "when you talk of your return and the prospective housewarming of the new home, that your family's united heart is right here in old Indianapolis—high Heaven's sole and only understudy." And this represented his very sincere feeling about "our" town; no other was comparable to it!

## III

He did his writing at night, a fact which accounted for the spacious leisure in which his days were enveloped. He usually had a poem pretty thoroughly fixed in his mind before he sought paper, but the actual writing was often a laborious process; and it was his habit, while a poem was in preparation, to carry the manuscript in his pocket for convenience of reference. The elisions required by dialect and his own notions of punctuation—

here he was a law unto himself—brought him into frequent collision with the lords of the proof desk; but no one, I think, ever successfully debated with him any point of folk speech. I once ventured to suggest that his use of the phrase "durin' the army," as a rustic veteran's way of referring to the Civil War, was not general, but probably peculiar to the individual he had heard use it. He stoutly defended his phrase and was ready at once with witnesses in support of it as a familiar usage of Indiana veterans.

In the matter of our Hoosier folk speech he was an authority, though the subject did not interest him comparatively or scientifically. He complained to me bitterly of an editor who had directed his attention to apparent inconsistencies of dialect in the proof of a poem. Riley held, and rightly, that the dialect of the Hoosier is not fixed and unalterable, but varies in certain cases, and that words are often pronounced differently in the same sentence. Eggleston's Hoosier is an earlier type than Riley's, belonging to the dark years when our illiteracy staggered into high percentages. And Eggleston

wrote of southern Indiana, where the "poor white" strain of the South had been most marked. Riley not only spoke for a later period, but his acquaintance was with communities that enjoyed a better social background; the schoolhouse and the rural "literary" were always prominent in his perspective.

He had preserved his youth as a place apart and unalterable, peopled with folk who lived as he had known them in his enchanted boyhood. Scenes and characters of that period he was able to revisualize at will. When his homing fancy took wing, it was to bear him back to the little town's dooryards, set with mignonette, old-fashioned roses, and borders of hollyhocks, or countryward to the streams that wound their way through fields of wheat and corn. Riley kept his place at innumerable firesides in this dream existence, hearing the veterans of the Civil War spin their yarns, or farmers discuss crop prospects, or the whispers of children awed by the "woo" of the wind in the chimney. If Pan crossed his vision (he drew little upon mythology) it was to sit under a sycamore above a "ripple" in the creek and

beat time rapturously with his goat hoof to the music of a Hoosier lad's willow whistle.

The country lore that Riley had collected and stored in youth was inexhaustible; it never seemed necessary for him to replenish his pitcher at the fountains of original inspiration. I have read somewhere a sketch of him in which he was depicted as walking with Wordsworthian calm through lonely fields, but nothing could be more absurd. Fondly as he sang of green fields and running brooks, he cultivated their acquaintance very little after he established his home at Indianapolis. Lamb could not have loved city streets more than he. Much as Bret Harte wrote of California after years of absence, so Riley drew throughout his life from scenes familiar to his boyhood and young manhood, and with undiminished sympathy and vigor.

His knowledge of rural life was intimate, though he knew the farm only as a country-town boy may know it, through association with farm boys and holidays spent in visits to country cousins. Once at the harvest season, as we were crossing Indiana in a train, he began

discoursing on apples. He repeated Bryant's poem "The Planting of the Apple Tree," as a prelude, and, looking out over the Hoosier Hesperides, began mentioning the varieties of apples he had known and commenting on their qualities. When I expressed surprise at the number, he said that with a little time he thought he could recall a hundred kinds, and he did in fact name more than fifty before we were interrupted.

The whimsicalities and comicalities and the heart-breaking tragedies of childhood he interpreted with rare fidelity. His wide popularity as a poet of childhood was due to a special genius for understanding the child mind. Yet he was very shy in the presence of children, and though he kept track of the youngsters in the houses of his friends, and could establish himself on good terms with them, he seemed uncomfortable when suddenly confronted by a strange child. This was due in some measure to the proneness of parents to exhibit their offspring that he might hear them "recite" his own poems, or in the hope of eliciting some verses commemorative of Johnny's or Mary's

precocity. His children were country-town and farm children whom he had known and lived among and unconsciously studied and appraised for the use he later made of them. Here, again, he drew upon impressions fixed in his own boyhood, and to this gallery of types he never, I think, added materially. Much of his verse for children is autobiographical, representing his own attitude of mind as an imaginative, capricious child. Some of his best character studies are to be found among his juvenile pieces. In "That-Air Young-Un," for example, he enters into the heart of an abnormal boy who

> "Come home onc't and said 'at he
> Knowed what the snake-feeders thought
> When they grit their wings; and knowed
> Turkle-talk, when bubbles riz
> Over where the old roots growed
> Where he th'owed them pets o' his—
> Little turripuns he caught
> In the County Ditch and packed
> In his pockets days and days!"

The only poem he ever contributed to the *Atlantic* was "Old Glory," and I recall that he held it for a considerable period, retouching

it, and finally reading it at a club dinner to test it thoroughly by his own standards, which were those of the ear as well as the eye. When I asked him why he had not printed it he said he was keeping it "to boil the dialect out of it." On the other hand, "The Poet of the Future," one of his best pieces, was produced in an evening. He was little given to displaying his poems in advance of publication, and this was one of the few that he ever showed me in manuscript. It had been a real inspiration; the writing of it had given him the keenest pleasure, and the glow of success was still upon him when we met the following morning. He wrote much occasional and personal verse which added nothing to his reputation—a fact of which he was perfectly aware—and there is a wide disparity between his best and his poorest. He wrote prose with difficulty; he said he could write a column of verse much more quickly than he could produce a like amount of prose.

His manuscripts and letters were works of art, so careful was he of his handwriting—a small, clear script as legible as engraving, and

with quaint effects of capitalization. In his younger days he indulged in a large correspondence, chiefly with other writers. His letters were marked by the good-will and cordiality, the racy humor and the self-mockery of his familiar talk. "Your reference"—this is a typical beginning —"to your vernal surroundings and cloistered seclusion from the world stress and tumult of the fevered town comes to me in veriest truth

> " 'With a Sabbath sound as of doves
> In quiet neighborhoods,' "

as that grand poet Oliver W. Longfellow so tersely puts it in his inimitable way." He addressed his correspondents by names specially designed for them, and would sign himself by any one of a dozen droll pseudonyms.

## IV

Riley's talent as a reader (he disliked the term recitationist) was hardly second to his creative genius. As an actor—in such parts, for example, as those made familiar by Jeffer-

son—he could not have failed to win high rank. His art, apparently the simplest, was the result of the most careful study and experiment; facial play, gesture, shadings of the voice, all contributed to the completeness of his portrayals. So vivid were his impersonations and so readily did he communicate the sense of atmosphere, that one seemed to be witnessing a series of dramas with a well-set stage and a diversity of players. He possessed in a large degree the magnetism that is the birthright of great actors; there was something very appealing and winning in his slight figure as he came upon the platform. His diffidence (partly assumed and partly sincere) at the welcoming applause, the first sound of his voice as he tested it with the few introductory sentences he never omitted—these spoken haltingly as he removed and disposed of his glasses —all tended to pique curiosity and win the house to the tranquillity his delicate art demanded. He said that it was possible to offend an audience by too great an appearance of cock-sureness; a speaker did well to manifest a certain timidity when he walked upon the

stage, and he deprecated the manner of a certain lecturer and reader, who always began by chaffing his hearers. [Riley's programmes consisted of poems of sentiment and pathos, such as "Good-bye, Jim" and "Out to Old Aunt Mary's," varied with humorous stories in prose or verse which he told with inimitable skill and without a trace of buffoonery. Mark Twain wrote, in "How to Tell a Story," that the wounded-soldier anecdote which Riley told for years was, as Riley gave it, the funniest thing he ever listened to.

In his travels Riley usually appeared with another reader. Richard Malcolm Johnston, Eugene Field, and Robert J. Burdette were at various times associated with him, but he is probably more generally known for his joint appearances with the late Edgar W. ("Bill") Nye. He had for Nye the warmest affection, and in the last ten years of his life would recount with the greatest zest incidents of their adventures on the road—Nye's practical jokes, his droll comments upon the people they met, the discomforts of transportation, and the horrors of hotel cookery. Riley's admiration for his

old comrade was so great that I sometimes suspected that he attributed to Nye the authorship of some of his own stories in sheer excess of devotion to Nye's memory.

His first reception into the inner literary circle was in 1887, when he participated in the authors' readings given in New York to further the propaganda of the Copyright League. Lowell presided on these occasions, and others who contributed to the exercises were Mark Twain, George W. Cable, Richard Henry Stoddard, Thomas Nelson Page, Henry C. Bunner, George William Curtis, Charles Dudley Warner, and Frank R. Stockton. It was, I believe, Mr. Robert Underwood Johnson, then of the *Century Magazine* (which had just enlisted Riley as a contributor), who was responsible for this recognition of the Hoosier. Nothing did more to establish Riley as a serious contestant for literary honors than his success on this occasion. He was greeted so cordially—from contemporaneous accounts he "ran away with the show"—that on Lowell's urgent invitation he appeared at a second reading.

Riley's intimate friendships with other writ-

ers were comparatively few, due largely to his home-keeping habit, but there were some for whom, without ever seeing much of them, he had a liking that approached affection. Mark Twain was one of these; Mr. Howells and Joel Chandler Harris were others. He saw Longfellow on the occasion of his first visit to Boston. Riley had sent him several of his poems, which Longfellow had acknowledged in an encouraging letter; but it was not the way of Riley to knock at any strange door, and General "Dan" Macaulay, once mayor of Indianapolis, a confident believer in the young Hoosier's future, took charge of the pilgrimage. Longfellow had been ill, but he appeared unexpectedly just as a servant was turning the visitors away. He was wholly kind and gracious, and "shook hands five times," Riley said, when they parted. The slightest details of that call —it was shortly before Longfellow's death— were ineffaceably written in Riley's memory —even the lavender trousers which, he insisted, Longfellow wore!

Save for the years of lyceum work and the last three winters of his life spent happily in

Florida, Riley's absences from home were remarkably infrequent. He derived no pleasure from the hurried travelling made necessary by his long tours as a reader; he was without the knack of amusing himself in strange places, and the social exactions of such journeys he found very irksome. Even in his active years, before paralysis crippled him, his range of activities was most circumscribed. The Lockerbie Street in which he lived so comfortably, tucked away though it is from the noisier currents of traffic, lies, nevertheless, within sound of the court-house bell, and he followed for years a strict routine which he varied rarely and only with the greatest apprehension as to the possible consequences.

It was a mark of our highest consideration and esteem to produce Riley at entertainments given in honor of distinguished visitors, but this was never effected without considerable plotting. (I have heard that in Atlanta "Uncle Remus" was even a greater problem to his fellow citizens!) Riley's innate modesty, always to be reckoned with, was likely to smother his companionableness in the presence of ultra-

literary personages. His respect for scholarship, for literary sophistication, made him reluctant to meet those who, he imagined, breathed a divine ether to which he was unacclimated. At a small dinner in honor of Henry James he maintained a strict silence until one of the other guests, in an effort to "draw out" the novelist, spoke of Thomas Hardy and the felicity of his titles, mentioning *Under the Greenwood Tree* and *A Pair of Blue Eyes*. Riley, for the first time addressing the table, remarked quietly of the second of these, "It's an odd thing about eyes, that they usually come in sets!"—a comment which did not, as I remember, strike Mr. James as being funny.

Riley always seemed a little bewildered by his success, and it was far from his nature to trade upon it. He was at pains to escape from any company where he found himself the centre of attraction. He resented being "shown off" (to use his own phrase) like "a white mouse with pink eyes." He cited as proof that he was never intended for a social career the unhappy frustration of his attempt to escort his first sweetheart to a party. Dressed with the

greatest care, he knocked at the beloved's door. Her father eyed him critically and demanded: "What you want, Jimmy?"

"Come to take Bessie to the party."

"Humph! Bessie ain't goin' to no party; Bessie's got the measles!"

## V

In so far as Riley was a critic of life and conduct, humor was his readiest means of expression. Whimsical turns of speech colored his familiar talk, and he could so utter a single word—always with quiet inadvertence—as to create a roar of laughter. Apart from the commoner type of anecdotal humor, he was most amusing in his pursuit of fancies of the Stocktonesque order. I imagine that he and John Holmes of Old Cambridge would have understood each other perfectly; all the Holmes stories I ever heard—particularly the one about Methuselah and the shoe-laces, preserved by Colonel Higginson—are very similar to yarns invented by Riley.

To catch his eye in a company or at a public

gathering was always dangerous, for if he was bored or some tedious matter was forward, he would seek relief by appealing to a friend with a slight lifting of the brows, or a telepathic reference to some similar situation in the past. As he walked the streets with a companion his comments upon people and trifling incidents of street traffic were often in his best humorous vein. With his intimates he had a fashion of taking up without prelude subjects that had been dropped weeks before. He was greatly given to assuming characters and assigning parts to his friends in the little comedies he was always creating. For years his favorite rôle was that of a rural preacher of a type that had doubtless aroused his animosity in youth. He built up a real impression of this character—a cadaverous person of Gargantuan appetite, clad in a long black alpaca coat, who arrived at farmhouses at meal-times and depleted the larder, while the children of the household, awaiting the second table in trepidation, gloomily viewed the havoc through the windows. One or another of us would be Brother Hotchkiss, or Brother Brookwarble,

and we were expected to respond in his own key of bromidic pietism. This device, continually elaborated, was not wholly foolishness on his part, but an expression of his deep-seated contempt for cant and hypocrisy, which he regarded as the most grievous of sins.

When he described some "character" he had known, it was with an amount of minute detail that made the person stand forth as a veritable being. Questions from the listener would be welcomed, as evidence of sympathy with the recital and interest in the individual under discussion. As I journeyed homeward with him once from Philadelphia, he began limning for two companions a young lawyer he had known years before at Greenfield. He carried this far into the night, and at the breakfast table was ready with other anecdotes of this extraordinary individual. When the train reached Indianapolis the sketch, vivid and amusing, seemed susceptible of indefinite expansion.

In nothing was he more diverting than in the superstitions he affected. No life could have been freer from annoyances and care

than his, and yet he encouraged the belief that he was pursued by a "hoodoo." This was the most harmless of delusions, and his nearest friends encouraged the idea for the enjoyment they found in his intense satisfaction whenever any untoward event—never anything important—actually befell him. The bizarre, the fantastic, had a mild fascination for him; he read occult meanings into unusual incidents of every kind. When Alfred Tennyson Dickens visited Indianapolis I went with him to call on Riley. A few days later Mr. Dickens died suddenly in New York, and soon afterward I received a note that he had written me in the last hour of his life. Riley was so deeply impressed by this that he was unable to free his mind of it for several days. It was an astounding thing, he said, to receive a letter from a dead man. For a time he found comfort in the idea that I shared the malevolent manifestations to which he fancied himself subject. We were talking in the street one day when a brick fell from a building and struck the sidewalk at our feet. He was drawing on a glove and quite characteristically did not start or

manifest any anxiety as to his safety. He lifted his head guardedly and with a casual air said: "I see they're still after you" (referring to the fact that a few weeks earlier a sign had fallen on me in Denver). Then, holding out his hands, he added mournfully: "They're after me, too!" The gloves—a pair brought him from London by a friend—were both lefts.

A number of years ago he gave me his own copy of the *Oxford Book of English Verse*—an anthology of which he was very fond. In it was pasted a book-plate that had previously escaped me. It depicted an old scholar in knee-breeches and three-cornered hat, with an armful of books. When asked about the plate, Riley explained that a friend had given it to him, but that he had never used it because, on counting the books, there seemed to be thirteen of them. However, some one having convinced him that the number was really twelve, the evil omen was happily dispelled.

Politics interested him not at all, except as to the personal characteristics of men prominent in that field. He voted only once, so he often told me, and that was at the behest of

a friend who was a candidate for some local office. Finding later that in his ignorance of the proper manner of preparing a ballot he had voted for his friend's opponent, he registered a vow, to which he held strictly, never to vote again. My own occasional dabblings in politics caused him real distress, and once, when I had playfully poked into a hornet's nest, he sought me out immediately to warn me of the dire consequences of such temerity. "They'll burn your barn," he declared; "they'll kidnap your children!"

His incompetence—real or pretended—in many directions was one of the most delightful things about him. Even in the commonest transactions of life he was rather helpless—the sort of person one instinctively assists and protects. His deficiencies of orientation were a joke among his friends, and though he insisted that he couldn't find his way anywhere, I'm disposed to think that this was part of the make-believe in which he delighted. When he intrusted himself to another's leading he was always pleased if the guide proved as incapable as himself. Lockerbie Street is a little hard to find, even for lifelong Indianapolitans, and for a

caller to confess his difficulties in reaching it was sure to add to the warmth of his welcome.

Riley had no patience for research, and cheerfully turned over to friends his inquiries of every sort. Indeed he committed to others with comical light-heartedness all matters likely to prove vexatious or disagreeable. He was chronically in search of something that might or might not exist. He complained for years of the loss of a trunk containing letters from Longfellow, Mark Twain, and others, though his ideas as to its genesis and subsequent history were altogether hazy.

He was a past master of the art of postponement, but when anything struck him as urgent he found no peace until he had disposed of it. He once summoned two friends, at what was usually for him a forbidden hour of the morning, to repair forthwith to the photographer's, that the three might have their pictures taken, his excuse being that one or another might die suddenly, leaving the desired "group" unrealized—a permanent sorrow to the survivors.

His portrait by Sargent shows him at his happiest, but for some reason he never ap-

peared to care for it greatly. There was, I believe, some vague feeling on his part that one of the hands was imperfect—a little too sketchy, perhaps. He would speak cordially of Sargent and describe his method of work with characteristic attention to detail; but when his opinion of the portrait was solicited, he would answer evasively or change the subject.

He clung tenaciously to a few haunts, one of these being for many years the office of the *Journal*, to which he contributed the poems in dialect that won his first recognition. The back room of the business office was a favorite loafing place for a number of prominent citizens who were responsive to Riley's humor. They maintained there something akin to a country-store forum of which Riley was the bright particular star. A notable figure of those days in our capital was Myron Reed, a Presbyterian minister of singular gifts, who had been a captain of cavalry in the Civil War. Reed and William P. Fishback, a lawyer of distinction, also of the company, were among the first Americans to "discover" Matthew Arnold. Riley's only excursion abroad was in company with Reed

and Fishback, and surely no more remarkable trio ever crossed the Atlantic. It is eloquent of the breadth of Riley's sympathies that he appreciated and enjoyed the society of men whose interests and activities were so wholly different from his own. They made the usual pious pilgrimages, but the one incident that pleased Riley most was a supper in the Beefsteak Room adjoining Irving's theatre, at which Coquelin also was a guest. The theatre always had a fascination for Riley, and this occasion and the reception accorded his reading of some of his poems marked one of the high levels of his career. Mr. Fishback reported that Coquelin remarked to Irving of Riley's recitations, that the American had by nature what they had been twenty years acquiring.

In keeping with the diffidence already referred to was his dread of making awkward or unfortunate remarks, and it was like him to exaggerate greatly his sins of this character. He illustrated Irving's fine nobility by an incident offered also as an instance of his own habit of blundering. Riley had known for years an English comedian attached to a stock com-

pany at Indianapolis, and he mentioned this actor to Irving and described a bit of "business" he employed in the part of First Clown in the graveyard scene in "Hamlet." Irving not only professed to remember the man, but confirmed in generous terms Riley's estimate of his performance as the grave-digger. When Riley learned later that what he had believed to be the unique practice of his friend had been the unbroken usage of the stage from the time of Shakespeare, he was inconsolable, and his blunder was a sore point with him to the end of his days.

Though his mail was enormous, he was always solicitous that no letter should escape. For a time it pleased him to receive mail at three points of delivery—his house, his publisher's, and the office of a trust company where a desk was reserved for him. The advantage of this was that it helped to fill in the day and to minimize the disparity between his own preoccupations and the more exacting employments of his friends. Once read, the letters were likely to be forgotten, but this did not lessen his joy in receiving them. He was the

meek slave of autograph-hunters, and at the holiday season he might be found daily inscribing books that poured in remorselessly from every part of the country.

## VI

The cheery optimism, tolerance, and mercy that are the burden of his verse summed up his religion. He told me once that he was a Methodist; at least, he had become a member of that body in his youth, and he was not aware, as he put it, that they had ever "fired" him. For a time he was deeply interested in Spiritualism and attended séances; but I imagine that he derived no consolation from these sources, as he never mentioned the subject in later years. Though he never probed far into such matters, speculations as to immortality always appealed to him, and he often reiterated his confidence that we shall meet and recognize, somewhere in the beyond, those who are dear to us on earth. His sympathy for bereaved friends was marked by the tenderest feeling. "It's all right," he would say bravely, and he

did believe, sincerely, in a benign Providence that makes things "right."

Here was a life singularly blessed in all its circumstances and in the abundant realization of its hopes and aims. Few poets of any period have received so generous an expression of public regard and affection as fell to Riley's lot. The very simplicity of his message and the melodious forms in which it was delivered won him the wide hearing that he enjoyed and that seems likely to be his continuing reward far into the future. Yale wrote him upon her rolls as a Master of Arts, the University of Pennsylvania made him a Doctor of Letters. The American Academy of Arts and Letters bestowed upon him its gold medal in the department of poetry; his last birthdays were observed in many parts of the country. Honor, love, obedience, troops of friends were his happy portion, and he left the world richer for the faith and hope and honest mirth that he brought to it.

## THE CHEERFUL BREAKFAST TABLE

"A good, honest, wholesome, hungry breakfast."
—*The Compleat Angler.*

"ONE fine morning in the full London season, Major Arthur Pendennis came over from his lodgings, according to his custom, to breakfast at a certain club in Pall Mall, of which he was a chief ornament." This has always seemed to me the noblest possible opening for a tale. The zest of a fine morning in London, the deliberation of a gentleman taking his ease in his club and fortifying himself against the day's events with a satisfying breakfast, are communicated to the reader in a manner that at once inspires confidence and arouses the liveliest expectations. I shall not go the length of saying that all novels should begin with breakfast, but where the disclosures are to be of moment, and we are to be urged upon adventures calculated to tax our emotions or our staying powers, a breakfast table serves admirably as a point of departure. We

thus begin the imaginary day where the natural day begins, and we form the acquaintance of the characters at an hour when human nature is most satisfactorily and profitably studied.

It is only a superstition that night alone affords the proper atmosphere for romance, and that the curtain must fall upon the first scene with the dead face of the king's messenger upturned to the moon and the landlord bawling from an upper window to know what it's all about. Morning is the beginning of all things. Its hours breathe life and hope. "Pistols and coffee!" The phrase whets the appetite both for the encounter and the cheering cup. The duel, to be sure, is no longer in favor, and it is not for me to lament its passing; but I mention it as an affair of dewy mornings, indelibly associated with hours when the hand is steady and courage runs high.

It may be said with all assurance that breakfast has fallen into sad neglect, due to the haste and rush of modern life—the commuter's anxiety touching the 8.27, the city man's fear that he may not be able to absorb the day's news before his car is at the door. Breakfast

has become a negligible item of the day's schedule. An increasing number of American citizens are unfit to be seen at the breakfast hour; and a man, woman, or child who cannot present a cheery countenance at breakfast is living an unhealthy life upon the brink of disaster. A hasty visit to the table, the gulping of coffee, the vicious snapping of teeth upon food scarcely looked at, and a wild rush to keep the first appointment noted on the calendar, is the poorest possible preparation for a day of honest work. The man who follows this practice is a terror to his business associates. Reports that "the boss isn't feeling well this morning" pass about the office, with a disturbance of the morale that does not make for the efficiency of the establishment. The wife who reaches the table dishevelled and fretful, under compulsion of her conscience, with the idea that the lord of the house should not be permitted to fare forth without her benediction, would do better to keep her bed. If the eggs are overdone or the coffee is cold and flavorless, her panicky entrance at the last moment will not save the situation. A

growl from behind the screening newspaper is a poor return for her wifely self-denial, but she deserves it. There is guilt upon her soul; if she had not insisted on taking the Smiths to supper after the theatre the night before, he would have got the amount of sleep essential to his well-being and the curtaining paper would not be camouflaging a face to which the good-by kiss at the front door is an affront, not a caress.

"Have the children come down yet?" the lone breakfaster growlingly demands. The maid replies indifferently that the children have severally and separately partaken of their porridge and departed. Her manner of imparting this information signifies rebellion against a system which makes necessary the repeated offering of breakfast to persons who accept only that they may complain of it. No happier is the matutinal meal in humbler establishments where the wife prepares and serves the food, and buttons up Susie's clothes or sews a button on Johnny's jacket while the kettle boils. If the husband met a bootlegger in the alley the previous night it is the wife's dis-

agreeable duty to rouse him from his protracted slumbers; and if, when she has produced him at the table, he is displeased with the menu, his resentment, unchecked by those restraints presupposed of a higher culture, is manifested in the playful distribution of the tableware in the general direction of wife and offspring. The family cluster fearfully at the door as the head of the house, with surly resignation, departs for the scene of his daily servitude with the smoke of his pipe trailing behind him, animated by no love for the human race but only by a firm resolution not to lift his hand until the last echoes of the whistle have died away.

It is foreign to my purpose to indict a whole profession, much less the medical fraternity, which is so sadly harassed by a generation of Americans who demand in pills and serums what its progenitors found in the plough handle and the axe, and yet I cannot refrain from laying at the doors of the doctors some burden of responsibility for the destruction of the breakfast table. The astute and diplomatic physician, perfectly aware that he is dealing with an out-

raged stomach and that the internal discomfort is due to overindulgence, is nevertheless anxious to impose the slightest tax upon the patient's self-denial. Breakfast, he reflects, is no great shakes anyhow, and he suggests that it be curtailed, or prescribes creamless coffee or offers some other hint equally banal. This is wholly satisfactory to Jones, who says with a sigh of relief that he never cared much for breakfast, and that he can very easily do without it.

About twenty-five years ago some one started a boom for the breakfastless day as conducive to longevity. I know persons who have clung stubbornly to this absurdity. The despicable habit contributes to domestic unsociability and is, I am convinced by my own experiments, detrimental to health. The chief business of the world is transacted in the morning hours, and I am reluctant to believe that it is most successfully done on empty stomachs. Fasting as a spiritual discipline is, of course, quite another thing; but fasting by a tired business man under medical compulsion can hardly be lifted to the plane of things spiritual. To delete break-

fast from the day's programme is sheer cowardice, a confession of invalidism which is well calculated to reduce the powers of resistance. The man who begins the day with a proscription that sets him apart from his neighbors may venture into the open jauntily, persuading himself that his abstinence proves his superior qualities; but in his heart, to say nothing of his stomach, he knows that he has been guilty of a sneaking evasion. If he were a normal, healthy being, he would not be skulking out of the house breakfastless. Early rising, a prompt response to the breakfast-bell, a joyous breaking of the night's fast is a rite not to be despised in civilized homes.

Old age rises early and calls for breakfast and the day's news. Grandfather is entitled to his breakfast at any hour he demands it. He is at an age when every hour stolen from the night is fairly plucked from oblivion, and to offer him breakfast in bed as more convenient to the household, or with a well-meant intention of easing the day for him, is merely to wound his feelings. There is something finely appealing in the thought of a veteran cam-

paigner in the army of life who doesn't wait for the bugle to sound reveille, but kindles his fire and eats his ration before his young comrades are awake.

The failure of breakfast, its growing ill repute and disfavor are not, however, wholly attributable to the imperfections of our social or economic system. There is no more reason why the homes of the humble should be illumined by a happy breakfast table than that the morning scene in abodes of comfort and luxury should express cheer and a confident faith in human destiny. Snobbishness must not enter into this matter of breakfast reform; rich and poor alike must be persuaded that the morning meal is deserving of all respect, that it is the first act of the day's drama, not to be performed in a slipshod fashion to spoil the rest of the play. It is the first chapter of a story, and every one who has dallied with the art of fiction knows that not merely the first chapter but the first line must stir the reader's imagination.

Morning has been much sung by the poets, some of them no doubt wooing the lyre in bed.

A bard to my taste, Benjamin S. Parker, an Indiana pioneer and poet who had lived in a log cabin and was, I am persuaded, an early and light-hearted breakfaster, wrote many verses on which the dew sparkles:

"I had a dream of other days,—
In golden luxury waved the wheat;
Intangled greenness shook the maize;
The squirrels ran with nimble feet,
And in and out among the trees
The hangbird darted like a flame;
The catbird piped his melodies,
Purloining every warbler's fame:
And then I heard triumphal song,
'Tis morning and the days are long."

I hope not to imperil my case for the cheerful breakfast table by asserting too much in support of it, but I shall not hesitate to say that the contemptuous disregard in which breakfast is now held by thousands of Americans is indisputably a cause of the low state to which the family tie has fallen. It is a common complaint of retrospective elderly persons that the family life, as our grandparents knew it, has been destroyed by the haste and

worry incident to modern conditions. Breakfast—a leisurely, jolly affair as I would have it, with every member of the household present on the stroke of the gong—is unequalled as a unifying force. The plea that everybody is in a hurry in the morning is no excuse; if there is any hour when haste is unprofitable it is that first morning hour.

It is impossible to estimate at this writing the effect of the daylight-saving movement upon breakfast and civilization. To add an hour to the work-day is resented by sluggards who, hearing seven chime, reflect that it is really only six, and that a little self-indulgence is wholly pardonable. However, it is to be hoped that the change, where accepted in good spirit, may bring many to a realization of the cheer and inspiration to be derived from early rising.

A day should not be "jumped into," but approached tranquilly and with respect and enlivened by every element of joy that can be communicated to it. At noon we are in the midst of conflict; at nightfall we have won or lost battles; but in the morning "all is possible and all unknown." If we have slept like

honest folk, and are not afraid of a dash of cold water, we meet the day blithely and with high expectation. If the day dawn brightly, there is good reason for sharing its promise with those who live under the same roof; if it be dark and rain beats upon the pane, even greater is the need of family communion, that every member may be strengthened for valiant wrestling with the day's tasks.

The disorder of the week-day breakfast in most households is intensified on Sunday morning, when we are all prone to a very liberal interpretation of the meaning of a day of rest. There was a time not so long ago when a very large proportion of the American people rose on Sunday morning with no other thought but to go to church. Children went to Sunday-school, not infrequently convoyed by their parents. I hold no brief for the stern inhibitions of the monstrous Puritan Sunday which hung over childhood like a gray, smothering cloud. Every one has flung a brick at Protestantism for its failures of reconstruction and readjustment to modern needs, and I am not without my own shame in this particular. The restoration of

breakfast to its rightful place would do much to put a household in a frame of mind for the contemplation of the infinite. Here, at least, we are unembarrassed by the urgency of the tasks of every day; here, for once in the week, at an hour that may very properly be set forward, a well-managed family may meet at table and infuse into the gathering the spirit of cheerful yesterdays and confident to-morrows.

No better opportunity is afforded for a friendly exchange of confidences, for the utterance of words of encouragement and hope and cheer. Tommy, if he has been dealt with firmly in this particular on earlier occasions, will not revive the old and bothersome question of whether he shall or shall not go to Sunday-school. If he is a stranger to that institution by reason of parental incompetence or apostasy, the hour is not a suitable one for mama to make timid suggestions as to the importance of biblical instruction. Nor will eighteen-year-old Madeline renew her demand for a new party dress when this matter was disposed of definitely Saturday night. Nor

will the father, unless he be of the stuff of which brutes are made, open a debate with his wife as to whether he shall accompany her to church or go to the club for a luxurious hour with the barber. A well-ordered household will not begin the week by wrangling on a morning that should, of all mornings, be consecrated to serenity and peace.

Great numbers of American households are dominated by that marvel of the age, the Sunday newspaper. For this prodigious expression of journalistic enterprise I have only the warmest admiration, but I should certainly exclude it from the breakfast table as provocative of discord and subversive of discipline. Amusing as the "funny page" may be, its color scheme does not blend well either with soft-boiled eggs or marmalade. Madeline's appetite for news of the social world may wait a little, and as there is no possibility of buying or selling on the Sabbath-day, the gentleman at the head of the table may as well curb his curiosity about the conclusions of the weekly market review. Fragments of Sunday newspapers scattered about a breakfast table are not decorative.

They encourage bad manners and selfishness. A newspaper is an impudent intrusion at the table at any time, but on Sunday its presence is a crime. On an occasion, the late William Graham Sumner was a guest in my house. Like the alert, clear-thinking philosopher he was, he rose early and read the morning paper before breakfast. He read it standing, and finding him erect by a window with the journal spread wide for greater ease in scanning it quickly, I begged him to be seated. "No," he answered; "always read a newspaper standing; you won't waste time on it that way."

With equal firmness I should exclude the morning mail from the table. The arrival of the post is in itself an infringement upon domestic privacy, and the reading of letters is deadly to that conversation which alone can make the table tolerable at any meal. Good news can wait; bad news is better delayed until the mind and body are primed to deal with it. If the son has been "canned" at school, or if the daughter has overstepped her allowance, or if some absent member of the family is ill, nothing can be done about it at the break-

fast table. On the first day of the month, the dumping of bills on the table, to the accompaniment of expostulations, regrets, and perhaps tears, should be forbidden. Few homes are so controlled by affection and generous impulses as to make possible the distribution of bills at a breakfast table without poisoning the day. A tradesman with the slightest feeling of delicacy will never mail a bill to be delivered on the morning of the first day of the month. Anywhere from the third or fourth to the twentieth, and so timed as to be delivered in the afternoon—such would be my suggestion to the worthy merchant. The head of the house knows, at dinner time, the worst that the day has for him; if fortune has smiled, he is likely to be merciful; if fate has thrown the dice against him, he will be humble. And besides, a discreet wife, receiving an account that has hung over her head ever since she made that sad, rash purchase, has, if the bill arrive in the afternoon post, a chance to conceal the odious thing until such time as the domestic atmosphere is clear and bright. Attempts to sneak the dressmaker's bill under

the coffee-pot are fraught with peril; such concealments are unworthy of American womanhood. Let the hour or half-hour at the breakfast table be kept free of the taint of bargain and sale, a quiet vestibule of the day, barred against importunate creditors.

As against the tendency, so destructive of good health and mental and moral efficiency, to slight breakfast, the food manufacturers have set themselves with praiseworthy determination to preserve and dignify the meal. One has but to peruse the advertising pages of the periodicals to learn of the many tempting preparations that are offered to grace the breakfast table. The obtuse, inured to hasty snatches, nibbles, and sips, are assisted to a proper appreciation of these preparations by the most enchanting illustrations. The art of publicity has spent itself lavishly to lure the world to an orderly and contemplative breakfast with an infinite variety of cereals that have been subjected to processes which make them a boon to mankind. When I hear of an addition to the long list, I fly at once to the grocer to obtain one of the crisp packages, and

hurry home to deposit it with the cook for early experiment. The adventurous sense is roused not only by the seductive advertisement but by the neatness of the container, the ears of corn or the wheat sheaf so vividly depicted on the wrapper, or the contagious smile of a radiant child brandishing a spoon and demanding more.

Only a slouchy and unimaginative housewife will repeat monotonously a breakfast schedule. A wise rotation, a continual surprise in the food offered, does much to brighten the table. The damnable iteration of ham and eggs has cracked the pillars of many a happy home. There should be no ground for cavil; the various items should not only be well-chosen, but each dish should be fashioned as for a feast of high ceremony. Gluttony is a grievous sin; breakfast, I repeat, should be a spiritual repast. If fruit is all that the soul craves, well enough; but let it be of paradisiacal perfection. If coffee and a roll satisfy the stomach's craving, let the one be clear and not so bitter as to keep the imbiber's heart protesting all day, and the other hot enough to melt butter and

of ethereal lightness. The egg is the most sinned against of all foods. It would seem that no one could or would wantonly ruin an egg, a thing so useful, so inoffensive; and yet the proper cooking of an egg is one of the most difficult of all culinary arts. Millions of eggs are ruined every year in American kitchens. Better that the whole annual output should be cast into the sea than that one egg should offend the eye and the palate of the expectant breakfaster.

It grieves me to be obliged to confess that in hotels and on dining-cars, particularly west of Pittsburgh, many of my fellow citizens are weak before the temptation of hot cakes, drenched in syrup. I have visited homes where the griddle is an implement frequently invoked through the winter months, and I have at times, in my own house, met the buckwheat cake and the syrup jug and meekly fallen before their combined assault; but the sight of a man eating hot cakes on a flying train, after a night in a sleeper, fills me with a sense of desolation. Verily it is not alone the drama that the tired business man has brought to low estate!

Sausage and buckwheat cakes have never

appealed to me as an inevitable combination like ham and eggs. Beefsteak and onions at the breakfast hour are only for those who expect to devote the remainder of the day to crime or wood-chopping. The scent in itself is not the incense for rosy-fingered morn; and steak at breakfast, particularly in these times of perpendicular prices, speaks for vulgar display rather than generosity.

The history of breakfast, the many forms that it has known, the customs of various tribes and nations, assist little in any attempt to re-establish the meal in public confidence. Plato may have done his loftiest thinking on an empty stomach; I incline to the belief that Sophocles was at all times a light breakfaster; Horace must regret that he passed into the Elysian Fields without knowing the refreshing qualities of a grapefruit. If my post-mortem terminal were less problematical, I should like to carry him a grapefruit—a specimen not chilled to death in cold storage—and divide it with him, perhaps adding a splash of Falernian for memory's sake. But the habits of the good and great of olden times are not

of the slightest importance to us of twentieth-century America. Still, not to ignore wholly the familiar literary associations suggested by my subject, Samuel Rogers and his weakness for entertaining at breakfast shall have honorable mention. Rogers's breakfasts, one of his contemporaries hinted, were a cunning test of the fitness of the guests to be promoted to the host's dinner table—a process I should have reversed, on the theory that the qualifications for breakfast guests are far more exacting than those for a dinner company. We have testimony that Rogers's breakfasts, informal and with every one at ease, were much more successful than his dinners. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron and Moore, Southey and Macaulay, the Duke of Wellington and Lord John Russell were fellows to make a lively breakfast table. At one of these functions Coleridge talked for three hours on poetry, an occasion on which, we may assume, the variety or quality of the food didn't matter greatly.

Breakfast as a social medium has never flourished in America, chiefly because of our lack of leisure. Where recognized at all it is

thrown into the middle of the day where it becomes an anomaly, an impudent intrusion. A breakfast that is a luncheon is not a breakfast, but a concession to the Philistines. Once, with considerable difficulty, I persuaded a lady of my acquaintance to undertake to popularize breakfast by asking a company, few and fit, for eight o'clock. The first party was delightful, and the second, moved along to nine, was equally successful. But the hostess was so pleased with her success that she increased the number of guests to a dozen and then to fifteen, and advanced the hour to noon, with the result that the felicity of the earlier hours was lost. One must have a concrete programme to be of service in these reforms, and I shall say quite fearlessly that a round table set for six is the ideal arrangement.

A breakfast must be planned with greatest care. It should never be resorted to as a means of paying social debts, but arranged with the utmost independence. Where a wife is a desirable guest and the husband is not, there is no reason why a plate should be wasted. On the other hand, I should as rigidly exclude the

wife who is socially a non-conductor. The talk at a breakfast table must be spirited, and it will not be otherwise if the company is well chosen. It's an absurd idea that candle-light is essential to sociability and that wit will not sparkle in the early morning. Some of the best talk I ever listened to has been at breakfast tables, where the guests conversed freely under the inspiration of a mounting sun. Doctor Holmes clearly believed the breakfast hour appropriate for the disclosure of the sprightliest philosophy.

An American novelist once explained that he did his writing in the afternoon because he couldn't make love in the morning. Not make love in the morning! The thought is barbarous. Morning is of sentiment all compact. Morning to the lover who possesses a soul is washed with Olympian dews. The world is all before him where to choose and his heart is his only guide. Love is not love that fears the morning light. . . . There was a house by the sea, whence a girl used to dart forth every morning for a run over the rocks. We used to watch her from our windows, admiring the light-

ness of her step, her unconscious grace as she was silhouetted on some high point of the shore against the blue of sea and sky. It was to think of him, her lover, in the free sanctuary of the new, clean day that she ran that morning race with her own spirits. And he, perhaps knowing that she was thus preparing herself for their first meeting, would fly after her, and they would come running back, hand in hand, and appear with glowing cheeks and shining eyes at the breakfast table, to communicate to the rest of us the joy of youth.

There are houses in which participation in the family breakfast is frankly denied to the guest, who is informed that by pressing a button in his room coffee will appear at any hour that pleases his fancy. Let us consider this a little. The ideal guest is rare; the number of persons one really enjoys having about, free to penetrate the domestic arcana, is small indeed. This I say who am not an inhospitable soul. That a master and mistress should keep the morning free is, however, no sign of unfriendliness; the shoving of breakfast into a room does not argue necessarily for churlish-

ness, and I have never so interpreted it. A hostess has her own affairs to look after, and the despatch of trays up-stairs enables her to guard her morning from invasion. Still, in a country house, a guest is entitled to a fair shot at the morning. The day is happier when the household assembles at a fixed hour not to be trifled with by a lazy and inconsiderate guest.

Moreover, we are entitled to know what our fellows look like in the morning hours. I have spoken of lovers, and there is no sterner test of the affections than a breakfast-table inspection. Is a yawn unbecoming? We have a right to know with what manner of yawn we are to spend our lives. Is it painful to listen to the crunching of toast in the mouth of the adored? Is the wit laggard in the morning hours when it should be at its nimblest? These are grave matters not lightly to be brushed aside. At breakfast the blemish in the damask cheek publishes itself shamelessly; an evil temper that is subdued by candle-light will betray itself over the morning coffee. At breakfast we are what we are, and not what we may make ourselves for good or ill before the stars twinkle.

I protest against breakfast in bed as not only unsocial but unbecoming in the children of democracy. I have never succumbed to this temptation without experiencing a feeling of humiliation and cowardice. A proper punishment for such self-indulgence is inflicted by the stray crumbs that lodge between the sheets unless one be highly skilled in the handling of breakfast trays. Crumbs in bed! Procrustes missed a chance here. The presence of emptied dishes in a bedroom is disheartening in itself; the sight of them brings to a sensitive soul a conviction of incompetence and defeat. You cannot evade their significance; they are the wreck of a battle lost before you have buckled on your armor or fired an arrow at the foe. My experiments have been chiefly in hotels, where I have shrunk from appearing in a vast hall built for banqueting and wholly unsuitable for breakfasting; but better suffer this gloomy isolating experience than huddle between covers and balance a tray on stubborn knees that rebel at the indignity.

The club breakfast is an infamous device designed to relieve the mind of what should be

the pleasant privilege of selection. I am uninformed as to who invented this iniquity of numbered alternatives, but I unhesitatingly pronounce him an enemy of mankind. Already too many forces are operating to beat down the imagination. I charge this monstrosity upon the propagandists of realism; certainly no romanticist in the full possession of his powers would tolerate a thing so deadly to the play of fancy. I want neither the No. 7 nor the No. 9 prescribed on the card; and the waiter's index finger wabbling down the margin in an attempt to assist me is an affront, an impudence. Breakfast should be an affair between man and his own soul; a business for the initiative, not the referendum.

Breakfast out of doors is the ideal arrangement, or in winter under an ample screen of glass. My own taste is for a perspective of sea or lake; but a lusty young river at the elbow is not to be despised. The camper, of course, has always the best of it; a breakfast of fresh-caught trout with an Indian for company serves to quicken such vestiges of the primitive as remain in us. But we do not, if we are wise, wait

for ideal conditions. It is a part of the great game of life to make the best of what we have, particularly in a day that finds the world spinning madly "down the ringing grooves of change."

The breakfast table must be made a safe place for humanity, an inspirational centre of democracy. A land whose people drowsily turn over for another nap at eight o'clock, or languidly ring for coffee at eleven, is doomed to destruction. Of such laziness is unpreparedness born—the vanguard of the enemy already howling at the postern; treason rampant in the citadel; wailing in the court. Breakfast, a sensible meal at a seasonable hour; sausage or beefsteak if you are capable of such atrocities; or only a juicy orange if your appetite be dainty; but breakfast, a cheerful breakfast with family or friends, no matter how great the day's pressure. This, partaken of in a mood of kindliness and tolerance toward all the world, is a definite accomplishment. By so much we are victors, and whether the gulfs wash us down or we sight the happy isles we have set sail with flags flying and to the stirring roll of drums.

## THE BOULEVARD OF ROGUES

NOTHING was ever funnier than Barton's election to the city council. However, it occurs to me that if I'm going to speak of it at all, I may as well tell the whole story.

At the University Club, where a dozen of us have met for luncheon every business day for many years, Barton's ideas on the subject of municipal reform were always received in the most contumelious fashion. We shared his rage that things were as they were, but as practical business men we knew that there was no remedy. A city, Barton held, should be conducted like any other corporation. Its affairs are so various, and touch so intimately the comfort and security of all of us, that it is imperative that they be administered by servants of indubitable character and special training. He would point out that a citizen's rights and privileges are similar to those of a stockholder, and that taxes are in effect assessments to which we submit only in the belief that the

sums demanded are necessary to the wise handling of the public business; that we should be as anxious for dividends in the form of efficient and economical service as we are for cash dividends in other corporations.

There is nothing foolish or unreasonable in these notions; but most of us are not as ingenious as Barton, or as resourceful as he in finding means of realizing them.

Barton is a lawyer and something of a cynic. I have never known a man whose command of irony equalled his. He usually employed it, however, with perfect good nature, and it was impossible to ruffle him. In the court-room I have seen him the target for attacks by a formidable array of opposing counsel, and have heard him answer an hour's argument in an incisive reply compressed into ten minutes. His suggestions touching municipal reforms were dismissed as impractical, which was absurd, for Barton is essentially a practical man, as his professional successes clearly proved before he was thirty. He maintained that one capable man, working alone, could revolutionize a city's government if he set about it in the right

spirit; and he manifested the greatest scorn for "movements," committees of one hundred, and that sort of thing. He had no great confidence in the mass of mankind or in the soundness of the majority. His ideas were, we thought, often fantastic, but it could never be said that he lacked the courage of his convictions. He once assembled round a mahogany table the presidents of the six principal banks and trust companies in our town and laid before them a plan by which, through the smothering of the city's credit, a particularly vicious administration might be brought to terms. The city finances were in a bad way, and, as the result of a policy of wastefulness and short-sightedness, the administration was constantly seeking temporary loans, which the local banks were expected to carry. Barton dissected the municipal budget before the financiers, and proposed that, as another temporary accommodation was about to be asked, they put the screws on the mayor and demand that he immediately force the resignations of all his important appointees and replace them with men to be designated by three citizens to be named by the bankers.

Barton had carefully formulated the whole matter, and he presented it with his usual clarity and effectiveness; but rivalry between the banks for the city's business, and fear of incurring the displeasure of some of their individual depositors who were closely allied with the bosses of the bipartisan machine, caused the scheme to be rejected. Our lunch-table strategy board was highly amused by Barton's failure, which was just what we had predicted.

Barton accepted his defeat with equanimity and spoke kindly of the bankers as good men but deficient in courage. But in the primaries the following spring he got himself nominated for city councilman. No one knew just how he had accomplished this. Of course, as things go in our American cities, no one qualified for membership in a university club is eligible for any municipal office, and no man of our acquaintance had ever before offered himself for a position so utterly without honor or dignity. Even more amazing than Barton's nomination was Barton's election. Our councilmen are elected at large, and we had assumed

that any strength he might develop in the more prosperous residential districts would be overbalanced by losses in industrial neighborhoods.

The results proved to be quite otherwise. Barton ran his own campaign. He made no speeches, but spent the better part of two months personally appealing to mechanics and laborers, usually in their homes or on their door-steps. He was at pains to keep out of the newspapers, and his own party organization (he is a Republican) gave him only the most grudging support.

We joked him a good deal about his election to an office that promised nothing to a man of his type but annoyance and humiliation. His associates in the council were machine men, who had no knowledge whatever of enlightened methods of conducting cities. The very terminology in which municipal government is discussed by the informed was as strange to them as Sanskrit. His Republican colleagues cheerfully ignored him, and shut him out of their caucuses; the Democrats resented his appearance in the council chamber

as an unwarranted intrusion—"almost an indelicacy," to use Barton's own phrase.

The biggest joke of all was Barton's appointment to the chairmanship of the Committee on Municipal Art. That this was the only recognition his associates accorded to the keenest lawyer in the State—a man possessing a broad knowledge of municipal methods, gathered in every part of the world—was ludicrous, it must be confessed; but Barton was not in the least disturbed, and continued to suffer our chaff with his usual good humor.

Barton is a secretive person, but we learned later that he had meekly asked the president of the council to give him this appointment. And it was conferred upon him chiefly because no one else wanted it, there being, obviously, "nothing in" municipal art discernible to the bleared eye of the average councilman.

About that time old Sam Follonsby died, bequeathing half a million dollars—twice as much as anybody knew he had—to be spent on fountains and statues in the city parks and along the boulevards.

The many attempts of the administration

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to divert the money to other uses; the efforts of the mayor to throw the estate into the hands of a trust company in which he had friends —these matters need not be recited here.

Suffice it to say that Barton was equal to all the demands made upon his legal genius. When the estate was settled at the end of a year, Barton had won every point. Follonsby's money was definitely set aside by the court as a special fund for the objects specified by the testator, and Barton, as the chairman of the Committee on Municipal Art, had so tied it up in a legal mesh of his own ingenious contriving that it was, to all intents and purposes, subject only to his personal check.

It was now that Barton, long irritated by the indifference of our people to the imperative need of municipal reform, devised a plan for arousing the apathetic electorate. A philosopher, as well as a connoisseur in the fine arts, he had concluded that our whole idea of erecting statues to the good and noble serves no purpose in stirring patriotic impulses in the bosoms of beholders. There were plenty of statues and not a few tablets in our town com-

memorating great-souled men, but they suffered sadly from public neglect. And it must be confessed that the average statue, no matter how splendid the achievements of its subject, is little regarded and serves only passively as a reminder of public duty. With what has seemed to me a sublime cynicism, Barton proceeded to spend Follonsby's money in a manner at once novel and arresting. He commissioned one of the most distinguished sculptors in the country to design a statue; and at the end of his second year in the council (he had been elected for four years), it was set up on the new boulevard that parallels the river.

His choice of a subject had never been made known, so that curiosity was greatly excited on the day of the unveiling. Barton had brought the governor of an adjoining State, who was just then much in the public eye as a fighter of grafters, to deliver the oration. It was a speech with a sting to it, but our people had long been hardened to such lashings. The mayor spoke in praise of the civic spirit which had impelled Follonsby to make so large a bequest to the public; and then, before five thousand



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persons, a little schoolgirl pulled the cord, and the statue, a splendid creation in bronze, was exposed to the amazed populace.

I shall not undertake to depict the horror and chagrin of the assembled citizens when they beheld, instead of the statue of Follonsby, which they were prepared to see, or a symbolic representation of the city itself as a flower-crowned maiden, the familiar pudgy figure, reproduced with the most cruel fidelity, of Mike O'Grady, known as "Silent Mike," a big bipartisan boss who had for years dominated municipal affairs, and who had but lately gone to his reward. The inscription in itself was an ironic master-stroke:

To
Michael P. O'Grady
Protector of Saloons, Friend of Crooks
For Ten Years a City Councilman
Dominating the Affairs of the Municipality
This Statue is Erected
By Grateful Fellow-Citizens
In Recognition of his Public Services

The effect of this was tremendously disturbing, as may be imagined. Every newspaper in

America printed a picture of the O'Grady statue; our rival cities made merry over it at our expense. The Chamber of Commerce, incensed at the affront to the city's good name, passed resolutions condemning Barton in the bitterest terms; the local press howled; a mass-meeting was held in our biggest hall to voice public indignation. But amid the clamor Barton remained calm, pointing to the stipulation in Follonsby's will that his money should be spent in memorials of men who had enjoyed most fully the confidence of the people. And as O'Grady had been permitted for years to run the town about as he liked, with only feeble protests and occasional futile efforts to get rid of him, Barton was able to defend himself against all comers.

Six months later Barton set up on the same boulevard a handsome tablet commemorating the services of a mayor whose venality had brought the city to the verge of bankruptcy, and who, when his term of office expired, had betaken himself to parts unknown. This was greeted with another outburst of rage, much to Barton's delight. After a brief interval an-

other tablet was placed on one of the river bridges. The building of that particular bridge had been attended with much scandal, and the names of the councilmanic committee who were responsible for it were set forth over these figures:

| | |
|---|---|
| Cost to the People | $249,950.00 |
| Cost to the Council | 131,272.81 |
| Graft | $118,677.19 |

The figures were exact and a matter of record. An impudent prosecuting attorney who had broken with the machine had laid them before the public some time earlier; but his efforts to convict the culprits had been frustrated by a judge of the criminal court who took orders from the bosses. Barton broke his rule against talking through the newspapers by issuing a caustic statement imploring the infuriated councilmen to sue him for libel as they threatened to do.

The city was beginning to feel the edge of Barton's little ironies. At the club we all realized that he was animated by a definite and high purpose in thus flaunting in enduring bronze the shame of the city.

"It is to such men as these," said Barton, referring to the gentlemen he had favored with his statue and tablets, "that we confide all our affairs. For years we have stupidly allowed a band of outlaws to run our town. They spend our money; they manage in their own way large affairs that concern all of us; they sneer at all the forces of decency; they have made serfs of us. These scoundrels are our creatures, and we encourage and foster them; they represent us and our ideals, and it's only fitting that we should publish their merits to the world."

While Barton was fighting half a dozen injunction suits brought to thwart the further expenditure of Follonsby's money for memorials of men of notorious misfeasance or malfeasance, another city election rolled round. By this time there had been a revulsion of feeling. The people began to see that after all there might be a way of escape. Even the newspapers that had most bitterly assailed Barton declared that he was just the man for the mayoralty, and he was fairly driven into office at the head of a non-partisan municipal ticket.

The Boulevard of Rogues we called it for

a time. But after Barton had been in the mayor's office a year he dumped the O'Grady statue into the river, destroyed the tablets, and returned to the Follonsby Fund out of his own pocket the money he had paid for them. Three noble statues of honest patriots now adorn the boulevard, and half a dozen beautiful fountains have been distributed among the parks.

The Barton plan is, I submit, worthy of all emulation. If every boss-ridden, machine-managed American city could once visualize its shame and folly as Barton compelled us to do, there would be less complaint about the general failure of local government. There is, when you come to think of it, nothing so preposterous in the idea of perpetuating in outward and visible forms the public servants we humbly permit to misgovern us. Nothing could be better calculated to quicken the civic impulse in the lethargic citizen than the enforced contemplation of a line of statues erected to rascals who have prospered at the expense of the community.

I'm a little sorry, though, that Barton never

carried out one of his plans, which looked to the planting in the centre of a down-town park of a symbolic figure of the city, felicitously expressed by a barroom loafer dozing on a whiskey barrel. I should have liked it, and Barton confessed to me the other day that he was a good deal grieved himself that he had not pulled it off!

# THE OPEN SEASON FOR AMERICAN NOVELISTS
[1915]

## I

THIS is the open season for American novelists. The wardens are in hiding and any one with a blunderbuss and a horn of powder is entitled to all the game he can kill. The trouble was started by Mr. Edward Garnett, a poacher from abroad, who crawled under the fence and wrought great havoc before he was detected. His invasion roused the envy of scores of native hunters, and at their behest all laws for game protection have been suspended, to satisfy the general craving for slaughter. Mr. Owen Wister on his bronco leads the field, a daring and orgulous knight, sincerely jealous for the good name of the ranges. The fact that I was once beguiled by an alluring title into purchasing one of his books in the fond hope that it would prove to be a gay romance about a lady, only to find that the heroine was, in fact, a cake, does not

alter my amiable feelings toward him. I made a pious pilgrimage to the habitat of that cake and invested in numerous replicas for distribution all the way from Colorado to Maine, accompanied by copies of the novel that so adroitly advertised it—a generosity which I have refrained from mentioning to Mr. Wister or his publisher to this day.

Mr. Wister's personal experiences have touched our oldest and newest civilization, and it is not for me to quarrel with him. Nor should I be saddling Rosinante for a trot over the fearsome range had he not taken a pot shot at poor old Democracy, that venerable offender against the world's peace and dignity. To drive Mr. Bryan and Mr. Harold Bell Wright into a lonely cleft of the foot-hills and rope and tie them together seems to me an act of inhumanity unworthy of a good sportsman. As I am unfamiliar with Mr. Wright's writings, I can only express my admiration for Mr. Wister's temerity in approaching them close enough to apply the branding-iron. Mr. Bryan as the protagonist of Democracy may not be dismissed so easily. To be sure, he has

never profited by any ballot of mine, but he has at times laid the lash with a sure hand on shoulders that needed chastisement. However, it is the free and unlimited printing of novels that here concerns us, not the consecration of silver.

Democracy is not so bad as its novels, nor, for that matter, is a constitutional monarchy. The taste of many an American has been debased by English fiction. At the risk of appearing ungracious, I fling in Mr. Garnett's teeth an armful of the writings of Mr. Hall Caine, Mrs. Barclay, and Marie Corelli. The slightest regard for the literary standards of a young and struggling republic should prompt the mother country to keep her trash at home. It is our most grievous sin that we have merely begun to manufacture our own rubbish, in a commendable spirit of building up home industries. In my youth I was prone to indulge in pirated reprints of engrossing tales of adorable curates' nieces who were forever playing Cinderella at hunt balls, and breaking all the hearts in the county. They were dukes' daughters, really, changed in the cradle—Trollope, with

a dash of bitters; but their effect upon me I believe to have been baneful.

A lawyer of my acquaintance used to remark in opening a conference with opposing counsel: "I am merely thinking aloud; I don't want to be bound by anything I say." It is a good deal in this spirit that I intrude upon the field of carnage, fortified with a white flag and a Red Cross badge. The gentle condescension of foreign critics we shall overlook as lacking in novelty; moreover, Mr. Lowell disposed of that attitude once and for all time.

If anything more serious is to be required in this engagement than these casual shots from my pop-gun I hastily tender my proxy to Mr. Howells. And I am saying (in a husky aside) that if in England, our sadly myopic stepmother, any one now living has served letters with anything like the high-minded devotion of Mr. Howells, or with achievements comparable to his for variety, sincerity, and distinction, I shall be glad to pay postage for his name.

We must not call names or make faces, but address ourselves cheerfully to the business at

hand. The American novel is, beyond question, in a bad way. Something is radically wrong with it. The short story, too, is under fire. Professor Canby would clap a Russian blouse on it and restore its first fine careless rapture. He makes out a good case and I cheerfully support his cause, with, however, a reservation that we try the effect of American overalls and jumper before committing ourselves fully to Slavic vestments. In my anxiety to be of service to the friends of American fiction, I am willing to act as pall-bearer or officiating minister, or even as corpse, with proper guaranties of decent burial.

## II

Our slow advance in artistic achievement has been defended on the plea that we have no background, no perspective, and that our absorption in business affairs leaves no time for that serene contemplation of life that is essential to the highest attainments. To omit the obvious baccalaureate bromide that we are inheritors of the lore of all the ages, it may be

suggested that our deficiencies in the creative arts are overbalanced by the prodigious labors of a people who have lived a great drama in founding and maintaining a new social and political order within little more than a century.

Philosophers intent upon determining the causes of our failure to contribute more importantly to all the arts have suggested that our creative genius has been diverted into commercial and industrial channels; that Bell and Edison have stolen and imprisoned the Promethean fire, while the altars of the arts have been left cold. Instead of sending mankind whirling over hill and dale at a price within the reach of all, Mr. Henry Ford might have been our enlaurelled Thackeray if only he had been born beneath a dancing star instead of under the fiery wheels of Ezekiel's vision.

The preachiness of our novels, of which critics complain with some bitterness, may be reprehensible, but it is not inexplicable. We are a people bred upon the Bible; it was the only book carried into the wilderness; it still has a considerable following among us, and all

reports of our depravity are greatly exaggerated. We are inured to much preaching. We tolerate where we do not admire Mr. Bryan, because he is the last of the circuit-riders, a tireless assailant of the devil and all his works.

I am aware of growls from the Tory benches as I timidly venture the suggestion—fully conscious of its impiety—that existing cosmopolitan standards may not always with justice be applied to our literary performances. The late Colonel Higginson once supported this position with what strikes me as an excellent illustration. "When," he wrote, "a vivacious Londoner like Mr. Andrew Lang attempts to deal with that profound imaginative creation, Arthur Dimmesdale in *The Scarlet Letter*, he fails to comprehend him from an obvious and perhaps natural want of acquaintance with the whole environment of the man. To Mr. Lang he is simply a commonplace clerical Lovelace, a dissenting clergyman caught in a shabby intrigue. But if this clever writer had known the Puritan clergy as we know them, the high priests of a Jewish theocracy, with the whole work of God in a strange land resting on

their shoulders, he would have comprehended the awful tragedy in this tortured soul."

In the same way the exalted place held by Emerson in the affections of those of us who are the fortunate inheritors of the Emerson tradition can hardly be appreciated by foreign critics to whom his writings seem curiously formless and his reasoning absurdly tangential. He may not have been a great philosopher, but he was a great philosopher for America. There were English critics who complained bitterly of Mark Twain's lack of "form," and yet I can imagine that his books might have lost the tang and zest we find in them if they had conformed to Old-World standards.

On the other hand, the English in which our novels are written must be defended by abler pens than mine. Just why American prose is so slouchy, so lacking in distinction, touches questions that are not for this writing. I shall not even "think aloud" about them! And yet, so great is my anxiety to be of service and to bring as much gaiety to the field as possible, that I shall venture one remark: that perhaps the demand on the part of students in our col-

leges to be taught to write short stories, novels, and dramas—and the demand is insistent—has obscured the importance of mastering a sound prose before any attempt is made to employ it creatively. It certainly cannot be complained that the literary impulse is lacking, when publishers, editors, and theatrical producers are invited to inspect thousands of manuscripts every year. The editor of a popular magazine declares that there are only fifteen American writers who are capable of producing a "good" short story; and this, too, at a time when short fiction is in greater demand than ever before, and at prices that would cause Poe and De Maupassant to turn in their graves. A publisher said recently that he had examined twenty novels from one writer, not one of which he considered worth publishing.

Many, indeed, are called but few are chosen, and some reason must be found for the low level of our fiction where the output is so great. The fault is not due to unfavorable atmospheric conditions, but to timidity on the part of writers in seizing upon the obvious American

material. Sidney Lanier remarked of Poe that he was a great poet, but that he did not know enough—meaning that life in its broad aspects had not touched him. A lack of "information," of understanding and vision, is, I should say, the fundamental weakness of the American novel. To see life steadily and whole is a large order, and prone as we are to skim lightheartedly the bright surfaces, we are not easily to be persuaded to creep to the rough edges and peer into the depths. We have not always been anxious to welcome a "physician of the iron age" capable of reading "each wound, each weakness clear," and saying "thou ailest here and here"! It is not "competent" for the artist to plead the unattractiveness of his material at the bar of letters; it is his business to make the best of what he finds ready to his hand. It is because we are attempting to adjust humanity to new ideals of liberty that we offer to ourselves, if not to the rest of the world, a pageant of ceaseless interest and variety.

It may be that we are too much at ease in our Zion for a deeper probing of life than our

fiction has found it agreeable to make. And yet we are a far soberer people than we were when Mr. Matthew Arnold complained of our lack of intellectual seriousness. The majority has proved its soundness in a number of instances since he wrote of us. We are less impatient of self-scrutiny. Our newly awakened social consciousness finds expression in many books of real significance, and it is inevitable that our fiction shall reflect this new sobriety.

Unfortunately, since the passing of our New England Olympians, literature as a vocation has had little real dignity among us; we have had remarkably few novelists who have settled themselves to the business of writing with any high or serious aim. Hawthorne as a brooding spirit has had no successor among our fictionists. Our work has been chiefly tentative, and all too often the experiments have been made with an eye on the publisher's barometer. Literary gossip is heavy with reports of record-breaking rapidity of composition. A writer who can dictate is the envy of an adoring circle; another who "never revises" arouses even more poignant despair. The laborious Balzac

tearing his proofs to pieces seems only a dingy and pitiable figure. Nobody knows the difference, and what's a well-turned sentence more or less? I saw recently a newspaper editorial commenting derisively on a novelist's confession that he was capable of only a thousand words a day, the point being that the average newspaper writer triples this output without fatigue. Newcomers in the field can hardly fail to be impressed by these rumors of novels knocked off in a month or three months, for which astonishing sums have been paid by generous magazine editors. We shall have better fiction as soon as ambitious writers realize that novel-writing is a high calling, and that success is to be won only by those who are willing to serve seven and yet seven other years in the hope of winning "the crown of time."

In his happy characterization of Turgenieff and his relation to the younger French school of realists, Mr. James speaks of the "great back-garden of his Slav imagination and his Germanic culture, into which the door constantly stood open, and the grandsons of Balzac were not, I think, particularly free to ac-

company him." I am further indebted to Mr. James for certain words uttered by M. Renan of the big Russian: "His conscience was not that of an individual to whom nature had been more or less generous; it was in some sort the conscience of a people. Before he was born he had lived for thousands of years; infinite successions of reveries had amassed themselves in the depths of his heart. No man has been as much as he the incarnation of a whole race: generations of ancestors, lost in the sleep of centuries, speechless, came through him to life and utterance."

I make no apology for thrusting my tin dipper again into Mr. James's bubbling well for an anecdote of Flaubert, derived from Edmond de Goncourt. Flaubert was missed one fine afternoon in a house where he and De Goncourt were guests, and was found to have undressed and gone to bed to *think!*

I shall not give comfort to the enemy by any admission that our novelists lack culture in the sense that Turgenieff and the great French masters possessed it. A matter of which I may complain with more propriety is their

lack of "information" (and I hope this term is sufficiently delicate) touching the tasks and aims of America. We have been deluged with "big" novels that are "big" only in the publishers' advertisements. New York has lately been the scene of many novels, but the New York adumbrated in most of them is only the metropolis as exposed to the awed gaze of provincial tourists from the rubber-neck wagon. Sex, lately discovered for exploitation, has resulted only in "arrangements" of garbage in pink and yellow, lightly sprinkled with musk.

As Rosinante stumbles over the range I am disposed to offer a few suggestions for the benefit of those who may ask where, then, lies the material about which our novelists are so deficient in "information." No strong hand has yet been laid upon our industrial life. It has been pecked at and trifled with, but never treated with breadth or fulness. Here we have probably the most striking social contrasts the world has ever seen; racial mixtures of bewildering complexity, the whole flung against impressive backgrounds and lighted from a thousand angles. Pennsylvania is only slightly

"spotted" on the literary map, and yet between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, nearly every possible phase and condition of life is represented. Great passions are at work in the fiery aisles of the steel mills that would have kindled Dostoiefsky's imagination. A pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night marks a limitless field for the earnest fictionist. A Balzac would find innumerable subjects awaiting him in the streets of Wilkesbarre!

At this point I must bemoan the ill-fortune that has carried so many American fiction writers to foreign shores. If Hawthorne had never seen Italy, but had clung to Salem, I am disposed to think American literature would be the richer. If fate had not borne Mr. Howells to Venice, but had posted him on the Ohio during the mighty struggle of the '60's, and if Mr. James had been stationed at Chicago, close to the deep currents of national feeling, what a monumental library of vital fiction they might have given us! If Mrs. Wharton's splendid gifts had been consecrated to the service of Pittsburgh rather than New York and Paris, how much greater might be our debt to her!

Business in itself is not interesting; business as it reacts upon character is immensely interesting. Mineral paint has proved to be an excellent preservative for *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, which remains our best novel of business. But if paint may be turned to account, why not cotton, wool, and the rest of the trade catalogue, every item with its own distinct genesis? In *The Turmoil* Mr. Tarkington staged, under a fitting canopy of factory smoke, a significant drama of the conflict between idealism and materialism.

Turning to our preoccupation with politics, we find another field that is all but fallow. Few novels of any real dignity may be tendered as exhibits in this department, and these are in a sense local—the comprehensive, the deeply searching, has yet to be done. Mr. Churchill's *Coniston*, and Mr. Brand Whitlock's *The Thirteenth District* are the happiest experiments I recall, though possibly there are others of equal importance. Yet politics is not only a matter of constant discussion in every quarter, but through and by politics many thousands solve the problem of existence. Alone of great national capitals Washington has never been

made the scene of a novel of distinction. Years ago we had Mrs. Burnett's *Through One Administration*, but it failed to establish itself as a classic. George Meredith would have found much in Washington life upon which to exercise his ironic powers.

With all our romantic longings it is little short of amazing that we are not more fecund in schemes for romantic drama and fiction. The stage, not to say the market, waits; but the settings are dingy from much use and the characters in threadbare costumes strut forth to speak old familiar lines. Again, there is an old superstition that we are a humorous people, and yet humor is curiously absent from recent fiction. "O. Henry" knew the way to the fountain of laughter, but contented himself with the shorter form; *Huckleberry Finn* seems destined to stand as our nearest approach to a novel of typical humor. We have had David Harums and Mrs. Wiggses a-plenty—kindly philosophers, often drawn with skill—but the results are character sketches, not novels.

## III

It is impossible in a general view of our fiction to dissociate the novel from the short story, which, in a way, has sapped its vitality. An astonishing number of short stories have shown a grasp of the movement, energy, and color of American life, but writers who have succeeded in this field have seemed incapable of longer flight. And the originality possessed by a great number of short-story writers seems to be shared only meagrely by those who experiment with the novel. When some venturesome Martian explores the Library of Congress it may be that in the short-story division he will find the surest key to what American life has been. There are few American novels of any period that can tip the scale against the twenty best American short stories, chosen for sincerity and workmanship. It would seem that our creative talent is facile and true in miniature studies, but shrinks from an ampler canvas and a broader brush. Frank Norris's *The Pit* and *The Octopus* continue to command respect from the fact that he had a panoramic sense that led him to

exercise his fine talents upon a great and important theme.

We have had, to be sure, many examples of the business and political novel, but practically all of them have been struck from the same die. A "big" politician or a "big" man of business, his daughter, and a lover who brazenly sets himself up to correct the morals of the powerful parent, is a popular device. Young love must suffer, but it must not meet with frustration. In these experiments (if anything so rigidly prescribed may be said to contain any element of experiment) a little realism is sweetened with much romance. In the same way the quasi-historical novel for years followed a stereotyped formula: the lover was preferably a Northern spy within the Southern lines; the heroine, a daughter of the traditional aristocratic Southern family. Her shuddersome ride to seek General Lee's pardon for the unfortunate officer condemned to be shot at daybreak was as inevitable as measles. The geography might be reversed occasionally to give a Northern girl a chance, but in any event her brother's animosity toward the hero

was always a pleasing factor. Another ancient formula lately revived with slight variations gives us a shaggy, elemental man brought by shipwreck or other means into contact with gentle womanhood. In his play *The Great Divide* William Vaughn Moody invested this device with dignity and power, but it would be interesting to see what trick might be performed with the same cards if the transformed hero should finally take his departure for the bright boulevards, while the heroine seized his bow and arrow and turned joyfully to the wilderness.

When our writers cease their futile experimenting and imitating, and wake up to the possibilities of American material we shall have fewer complaints of the impotence of the American novel. We are just a little impatient of the holding of the mirror up to nature, but nevertheless we do not like to be fooled all the time. And no one is quicker than an American to "get down to brass tacks," when he realizes that he must come to it. Realism is the natural medium through which a democracy may "register" (to borrow a term from

the screen drama) its changing emotions, its hopes and failures. We are willing to take our recreations in imaginary kingdoms, but we are blessed with a healthy curiosity as to what really is happening among our teeming millions, and are not so blind as our foreign critics and the croakers at home would have us think as to what we do and feel and believe. But the realists must play the game straight. They must paint the wart on the sitter's nose—though he refuse to pay for the portrait! Half-hearted dallying and sidling and compromising are not getting us anywhere. The flimsiest romance is preferable to dishonest realism. It is the meretricious stuff in the guise of realism that we are all anxious to delete from the catalogues.

Having thus, I hope, appeased the realists, who are an exacting phalanx, difficult to satisfy, I feel that it is only right, just, and proper to rally for a moment the scampering hosts of the romanticists. It is deplorable that Realism should be so roused to bloodthirstiness by any intrusion upon the landscape of Romanticism's dainty frocks and fluttering ribbons. Before

Realism was, Romance ruled in many kingdoms. If Romance had not been, Realism would not be. Let the Cossacks keep to their side of the river and behave like gentlemen! Others have said it who spoke with authority, and I shall not scruple to repeat that the story for the story's sake is a perfectly decent, honorable, and praiseworthy thing. It is as old as human nature, and the desire for it will not perish till man has been recreated. Neither much argument about it, nor the limning against the gray Russian sky-line of the august figures of Dostoiefsky, Tolstoy, and Turgenieff will change the faith of the many who seek in fiction cheer and recreation.

Again, I beg, let us preserve a good temper as we ponder these matters. More and more we shall have true realism; but more and more let us hope for the true romance. Stevenson's familiar contributions to the discussion are in the best vein of the cause he espouses; and although a New York newspaper referred to him the other day as the "Caledonian *poseur*," his lantern-bearers continue to signal merrily from the heights and are not to be confused

with Realism's switch targets in the railroad yards in the valley. The lords of the high pale brow in classrooms and on the critical dais are much too contemptuous of Romance. Romance we must have, to the end of time, no matter how nobly Realism may achieve. With our predisposition as a healthy-minded and cheerful people toward tales of the night-rider and the scratch of the whip butt on the inn door, it is unfair to slap Romance on the wrist and post her off to bed like a naughty stepchild. Even the stern brow of the realist must relax at times.

Many people of discernment found pleasure in our Richard Carvels, Janice Merediths, and Hugh Wynnes. Miss Johnston's *To Have and to Hold* and *Lewis Rand* are books one may enjoy without shame. The stickler for style need not be scornful of Mrs. Catherwood's *Lazarre* and *The Romance of Dollard.* Out of Chicago came Mr. Henry Fuller's charming exotic, *The Chevalier of Piensieri-Vani. Monsieur Beaucaire* and Miss Sherwood's *Daphne* proved a while ago that all the cherries have not been shaken from the tree—only the trees in these cases, unfortunately, were not Amer-

ican. Surely one of these days a new Peter Pan will fly over an American greenwood. I should bless the hand that pressed upon me for reading to-night so diverting a skit as Mr. Vielé's *The Inn of the Silver Moon.* I shall not even pause to argue with those who are plucking my coat-tails and whispering that these are mere trifles, too frivolous to be mentioned when the novel is the regular order of the conference. I am looking along the shelf for Stockton, the fanciful and whimsical. How pleasant it would be to meet Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine again, or to lodge for a day at another Squirrel Inn. And yet (O fame, thou fickle one!) when I asked a young lady the other day if she knew Stockton, she replied with emphasis that she did not; that "that old quaint stuff doesn't go any more!"

Having handed Realism a ticket to Pittsburgh with generous stop-over privileges, I regret that I am unable to point Romance to any such promising terminus. But the realm of Romance is extra-territorial; Realism alone demands the surveyor's certificate and abstracts of title. An Irish poet once assured me

that fairies are to be found everywhere, and surely somewhere between Moosehead Lake and Puget Sound some lad is piping lustily on a new silver whistle where the deer come down to drink.

## IV

It is the fashion to attribute to the automobile and the motion-picture all social phenomena not otherwise accounted for. The former has undoubtedly increased our national restlessness, and it has robbed the evening lamp of its cosey bookish intimacy. The screen-drama makes possible the "reading" of a story with the minimum amount of effort. A generation bred on the "movies" will be impatient of the tedious methods of writers who cannot transform character by a click of the camera, but require at least four hundred pages to turn the trick. It is doubtful whether any of the quasi-historical novels that flourished fifteen and twenty years ago and broke a succession of best-selling records would meet with anything approximating the same amiable reception if launched to-day. A trained scenario-

writer, unembarrassed by literary standards and intent upon nothing but action, can beat the melodramatic novelist at his own game every time. A copyright novel of adventure cannot compete with the same story at ten cents or a quarter as presented in the epileptic drama, where it lays no burden upon the beholder's visualizing sense. The resources of the screen for creating thrills are inexhaustible; it draws upon the heavens above, the earth beneath, and the waters under the earth; and as nothing that can be pictured can be untrue—or so the confiding "movie" patron, unfamiliar with the tricks of the business, believes—the screen has also the great advantage of plausibility.

The silent drama may therefore exercise a beneficent influence, if it shall prove to have shunted into a new channel of publication great numbers of stories whose justification between covers was always debatable. Already many novels of this type have been resurrected by the industrious screen producers. If, after the long list has been exhausted, we shall be spared the "novelization" of screen scenarios in the fashion of the novelized play, we shall

be rid of some of the débris that has handicapped the novelists who have meekly asked to be taken seriously.

The fiction magazines also have cut into the sale of ephemeral novels. For the price of one novel the uncritical reader may fortify himself with enough reading matter to keep him diverted for a month. Nowadays the hurrying citizen approaches the magazine counter in much the same spirit in which he attacks the help-yourself lunch-trough—grabs what he likes and retires for hurried consumption. It must, however, be said for the much-execrated magazine editors that with all their faults and defaults they are at least alive to the importance and value of American material. They discovered O. Henry, now recognized as a writer of significance. I should like to scribble a marginal note at this point to the effect that writers who are praised for style, those who are able to employ *otiose*, *meticulous*, and *ineluctable* with awe-inspiring inadvertence in tales of morbid introspection, are not usually those who are deeply learned in the ways and manners of that considerable body of our people who are obliged to

work for a living. We must avoid snobbishness in our speculations as to the available ingredients from which American fiction must be made. Baseball players, vaudeville and motion-picture performers, ladies employed as commercial travellers, and Potash and Perlmutter, are all legitimate subjects for the fictionist, and our millions undoubtedly prefer just now to view them humorously or romantically.

## V

In our righteous awakening to the serious plight to which our fiction has come it is not necessary, nor is it becoming, to point the slow unmoving finger of scorn at those benighted but well-meaning folk who in times past did what they could toward fashioning an American literature. We all see their errors now; we deplore their stupidity, we wish they had been quite different; but why drag their bones from the grave for defilement? Cooper and Irving meant well; there are still misguided souls who find pleasure in them. It was not Hawthorne's fault that he so bungled *The*

*Scarlet Letter*, nor Poe's that he frittered away his time inventing the detective story. Our deep contrition must not betray us into hardness of heart toward those unconscious sinners, who cooled their tea in the saucer and never heard of a samovar!

There are American novelists whose portraits I refuse to turn to the wall. Marion Crawford had very definite ideas, which he set forth in a most entertaining essay, as to what the novel should be, and he followed his formula with happy results. His *Saracinesca* still seems to me a fine romance. There was some marrow in the bones of E. W. Howe's *Story of a Country Town*. I can remember when Miss Woolson was highly regarded as a writer, and when Miss Howard's amusing *One Summer* seemed not an ignoble thing. F. J. Stimson, Thomas Nelson Page, Arthur Sherburne Hardy, Miss Murfree, Mary Hallock Foote, T. B. Aldrich, T. R. Sullivan, H. C. Bunner, Robert Grant, and Harold Frederic all labored sincerely for the cause of American fiction. F. Hopkinson Smith told a good story and told it like a gentleman. Mr. Cable's right to a place in the front

rank of American novelists is not, I believe, questioned in any survey; if *The Grandissimes* and *Old Creole Days* had been written in France, he would probably be pointed to as an author well worthy of American emulation.

No doubt this list might be considerably expanded, as I am drawing from memory, and merely suggesting writers whose performances in most instances synchronize with my first reading of American novels. I do not believe we are helping our case materially by ignoring these writers as though they were a lot of poor relations whenever a foreign critic turns his condescending gaze in our direction.

## VI

It is a hopeful sign that we now produce one or two, or maybe three, good novels a year. The number is bound to increase as our young writers of ambition realize that technic and facility are not the only essentials of success, but that they must burrow into life—honeycomb it until their explorations carry them to the core of it. There are novels that are half

good; some are disfigured by wabbly characterizations; or the patience necessary to a proper development of the theme is lacking. However, sincerity and an appreciation of the highest function of the novel as a medium for interpreting life are not so rare as the critics would have us believe.

I have never subscribed to the idea that the sun of American literature rises in Indiana and sets in Kansas. We have had much provincial fiction, and the monotony of our output would be happily varied by attempts at something of national scope. It is not to disparage the small picture that I suggest for experiment the broadly panoramic—"A Hugo flare against the night"—but because the novel as we practise it seems so pitifully small in contrast with the available material. I am aware, of course, that a hundred pages are as good as a thousand if the breath of life is in them. Flaubert, says Mr. James, *made* things big.

We must escape from this carving of cherry stones, this contentment with the day of littleness, this use of the novel as a plaything where

it pretends to be something else. And it occurs to me at this juncture that I might have saved myself a considerable expenditure of ink by stating in the first place that what the American novel really needs is a Walt Whitman to fling a barbaric yawp from the crest of the Alleghanies and proclaim a new freedom. For what I have been trying to say comes down to this: that we shall not greatly serve ourselves or the world's literature by attempts to Russianize, or Gallicize, or Anglicize our fiction, but that we must strive more earnestly to Americanize it—to make it express with all the art we may command the life we are living and that pretty tangible something that we call the American spirit.

The bright angels of letters never appear in answer to prayer; they come out of nowhere and knock at unwatched gates. But the wailing of jeremiads before the high altar is not calculated to soften the hearts of the gods who hand down genius from the skies. It is related that a clerk in the patent office asked to be assigned to a post in some other department on the ground that practically everything had

been invented and he wanted to change before he lost his job. That was in 1833.

Courage, comrade! The songs have not all been written nor the tales all told.

## THE CHURCH FOR HONEST SINNERS

THE young man who greeted me cheerfully in the lobby of the hotel in Warburton, my native town, and handed me a card setting forth the hours of services at St. John's Church, evidently assumed that I was a commercial traveller. I was in no wise offended by his mistake, as I sincerely admire the heralds of prosperity and sit with them at meat whenever possible. I am a neurologist by profession, but write occasionally, and was engaged just then in gathering material for a magazine article on occupational diseases. A friend in the Department of Labor had suggested Warburton as a likely hunting-ground, as children employed there in a match-factory were constantly being poisoned, and a paint-factory also was working dire injury to its employees.

"I'm afraid," I replied to the engaging young representative of St. John's Men's League, "that my religious views wouldn't be tolerated at St. John's. But I thank you, just the same."

I had been baptized in St. John's and remembered it well from my youth. On my way up-town from the station I had noted its handsome new edifice of impeccable Gothic.

"We have the best music in town, and our minister is a live wire. He knows how to preach to men—he's cut big slices out of the other churches."

"Gives the anxious sinner a clean bill of health, does he?"

"Well, most of the leading citizens go there now," he answered, politely ignoring my uncalled-for irony. "Men who never went to church before; the men who do things in Warburton. Our minister's the best preacher in the diocese. His subject this morning is 'The Prodigal Son.'"

I felt guiltily that the topic might have been chosen providentially to mark my return, and it occurred to me that this might be a good chance to see Warburton in its best bib and tucker. However, having planned to spend the morning in the slum which the town had acquired with its prosperity, I hardened my heart against the young solicitor, in spite of his

unobtrusive and courteous manner of extending the invitation.

"You represent a saint's church," I remarked, glancing at the card. "I travel a good deal and I haven't found a church specially designed for sinners like me. I'm uncomfortable among the saints. I'm not quarrelling with your church or its name, but I've long had a feeling that our church nomenclature needs revision. Still, that's a personal matter. You've done your duty by me, and I'd be glad to come if I didn't have another engagement."

The pages of a Chicago morning newspaper that lay across my knees probably persuaded him that I was lying. However, after a moment's hesitation he sat down beside me.

"That's funny, what you said about a church for sinners—but we have one right here in Warburton; odd you never heard of it! It was written up in the newspapers a good deal. It's just across the street from St. John's on Water Street."

I recalled now that I had seen a strange church in my walk to the hotel, but the new St. John's had so absorbed my attention that

I had passed it with only a glance. It came back to me that it was a white wooden structure, and that boards were nailed across its pillared portico as though to shut out the public while repairs were in progress.

"Saints excluded, sinners only need apply?"

He nodded, and looked at me queerly, as though, now that I had broached the matter, he considered the advisability of telling me more. It was ten o'clock and half a dozen church-bells clanged importunately as a background for the *Adeste Fideles* rung from St. John's chimes.

"The Church For Honest Sinners," might suit you, only it's closed—closed for good, I guess," he remarked, again scrutinizing me closely.

He played nervously with a pack of cards similar to the one with which he had introduced himself. Other men, quite as unmistakably transients as I, were lounging down from breakfast, settling themselves to their newspapers, or seeking the barber-shop. Something in my attitude toward the church for which he was seeking worshippers seemed to arrest him.

He was a handsome, clear-eyed, wholesome-looking young fellow, whose life had doubtless been well sheltered from evil; there was something refreshingly naïve about him. I liked his straightforward manner of appealing to strangers; a bank teller, perhaps, or maybe a clerk in the office of one of the manufacturing companies whose indifference to the welfare of their laborers I had come to investigate. Not the most grateful of tasks, this of passing church advertisements about in hotel lobbies on Sunday mornings. It requires courage, true manliness. My heart warmed to him as I saw a number of men eying us from the cigar-stand, evidently amused that the young fellow had cornered me. A member of the group, a stout gentleman in checks, held one of the cards in his hand and covertly pointed with it in our direction.

"If there's a story about the sinners' church I'd like to hear it," I remarked encouragingly. "It seemed to be closed—suppose they're enlarging it to accommodate the rush."

"Well, no; hardly that," he replied soberly. "It was built as an independent scheme—none

of the denominations would stand for it of course."

"Why the 'of course'?"

"Well," he smiled, "the idea of sin isn't exactly popular, is it? And besides everybody isn't wicked; there are plenty of good people. There's good in all men," he added, as though quoting.

"I can't quarrel with that. But how about this Church For Honest Sinners? Tell me the story."

"Well, it's a queer sort of story, and as you're a stranger and I'm not likely to meet you again, I'll tell you all I know. It was built by a woman." He crossed his legs and looked at the clock. "She was rich as riches go in a town like this. And she was different from other people. She was left a widow with about a hundred thousand dollars, and she set apart half of it to use in helping others. She wouldn't do it through societies or churches; she did it all herself. She wasn't very religious—not the way we use the word—not the usual sort of church woman who's zealous in guilds and societies and enjoys running things. She wasn't above ask-

ing the factory hands to her house now and then, and was always helping the under dog. She was splendid—the finest woman that ever lived; but of course people thought her queer."

"Such people are generally considered eccentric," I commented.

"The business men disliked her because they said she was spoiling the poor people and putting bad notions into their heads."

"I dare say they did! I can see that a woman like that would be criticised."

"Then when they tore down old St. John's and began building the new church, she said she'd build a church after her own ideas. She spent twenty-five thousand dollars building that church you noticed in Water Street and she called it 'The Church For Honest Sinners.' She meant to put a minister in who had some of her ideas about religion, but right there came her first blow. As her church wasn't tied up to any of the denominations she couldn't find a man willing to take the job. I suppose the real trouble was that nobody wanted to mix up with a scheme like that; it was too radical; didn't seem exactly respectable. It's

easy, I suppose, when there's a big whooping crowd—Billy Sunday and that sort of thing—and the air is full of emotionalism, to get people to the mourners' bench to confess that they're miserable sinners. But you can see for yourself that it takes nerve to walk into the door of a church that's for sinners only—seems sort o' foolish!

"I shouldn't be telling you about this if I hadn't seen that you had the same idea the builder of that church had: that there's too much of the saint business and general smugness about our churches, and that a church that frankly set out to welcome sinners would play, so to speak, to capacity. You might think that all the Cains, Judases, and Magdalens would feel that here at last was a door of Christian hope flung open for them. But it doesn't work that way—at least it didn't in this case. I suppose there are people in this town right now, all dressed up to go to church, who've broken all the Ten Commandments without feeling they were sinners; and of course the churches can't go after sin the way they used to, with hell and brimstone; the people won't

stand for it. You've been thinking that a church set apart for sinners would appeal to people who've done wrong and are sorry about it, but it doesn't; and that's why that church on Water Street's boarded up—not for repairs, as you imagined, but because only one person has ever crossed the threshold. It was the idea of the woman who built it that the door should stand open all the time, night and day, and the minister, if she could have found one to take the job, would have been on the lookout to help the people who went there."

This was rather staggering. Perhaps, I reflected, it is better after all to suffer the goats to pasture, with such demureness as they can command, among the sheep.

"I suppose," I remarked, "that the founder of the church was satisfied with her experiment—she hadn't wholly wasted her money, for she had found the answers to interesting questions as to human nature—the vanity of rectitude, the pride of virtue, the consolations of hypocrisy."

He looked at me questioningly, with his frank innocent eyes, as though estimating the

extent to which he might carry his confidences.

"Let me say again that I shouldn't be telling you all this if you didn't have her ideas—and without ever knowing her! She lived on the corner below the church, where she could watch the door. She watched it for about two years, day and night, without ever seeing a soul go in, and people thought she'd lost her mind. And then, one Sunday morning when the whole town—all her old friends and neighbors—were bound for church, she came out of her house alone and walked straight down to that church she had built for sinners, and in at the door.

"You see," he said, rising quickly, as though recalling his obligations to St. John's Men's League, "she was the finest woman in town—the best and the noblest woman that ever lived! They found her at noon lying dead in the church. The failure of her plan broke her heart; and that made it pretty hard—for her family—everybody."

He was fingering his cards nervously, and I did not question the sincerity of the emotion his face betrayed.

"It is possible," I suggested, "that she had grown morbid over some sin of her own, and had been hoping that others would avail themselves of the hospitality of a church that was frankly open to sinners. It might have made it easier for *her*."

He smiled with a childlike innocence and faith.

"Not only not possible," he caught me up, with quick dignity, "but incredible! She was my mother."

# THE SECOND-RATE MAN IN POLITICS
## [1916]

In our great modern States, where the scale of things is so large, it does seem as if the remnant might be so increased as to become an actual power, even though the majority be unsound.—MATTHEW ARNOLD, *Numbers*.

### I

WHO governs America?

The answer is obvious: we are a republic, a representative democracy enjoying to the utmost government of, for, and by the people. America is governed by persons we choose, presumably on our own initiative, to serve us, to make, execute, and interpret laws for us. Addicted as we are to the joy of phrases, we find in these *clichés* unfailing delight.

Democracy, ideally considered, is an affair of the wisest and best. As the privileges of the ballot are generously extended to all, the whole people are invested with an initiative and an authority which it is their duty to exercise.

We assume that all are proud of their inheritance of liberty, jealous of their power, and alert in performing the duties of citizenship. That we are not highly successful in realizing this ideal is a matter that is giving increasing concern to thoughtful Americans.

As these words are read thousands of candidates are before the electorate for consideration, and the patriotic citizen is presumably possessing himself of all available information regarding them, determined to vote only for the most desirable. The parties have done their best, or worst, as we choose to view the matter, and it is "up to the people" to accept or reject those who offer themselves for place. The citizen is face to face with the problem, Shall he vote for candidates he knows to be unfit, merely to preserve his regularity, or shall he cast his ballot for the fittest men without respect to the party emblems on his ballot? Opposed to the conscientious voter, and capable of defeating his purpose, are agencies and influences with which it is well-nigh impossible for him to cope. The higher his intelligence and the nobler his aim, the less he is able to reckon

with forces which are stubbornly determined to nullify his vote.

The American voter is not normally independent; it is only when there has been some marked affront to the party's intelligence or moral sense that we observe any display of independence. Independent movements are always reassuring and encouraging. The revolt against Blaine in 1884, the Gold-Democratic movement in 1896, were most significant; and I am disposed to give a somewhat similar value to the Progressive movement of 1912. But the average voter is a creature of prejudice, who boasts jauntily that he never scratches his ticket. He follows his party with dogged submission and is more or less honestly blind to its faults.

As my views on this subject are more usually voiced by independents than by partisans, it may not be amiss to say that I am a party man, a Democrat, sufficiently "regular" to vote with a good conscience in primary elections. Living in a State where there is no point of rest in politics, where one campaign dovetails into another, I have for twenty-five years

been an observer of political tendencies and methods. I may say of the two great parties, as Ingersoll remarked of the life beyond, "I have friends in both places." One of my best friends was a "boss" who served a term in prison for scratching a tally-sheet. I am perfectly familiar with the theories upon which bossism is justified, the more plausible being that only by maintaining strong local organizations, that is to say, Machines, can a party so intrench itself as to support effectively the policies and reforms dear to the heart of the idealist. And bosses do, indeed, sometimes use their power benevolently, though this happens usually where they see a chance to win advantage or to allay popular clamor.

It is not of the pending campaign that I write, and any references I make to it are only for the purpose of illustrating phases or tendencies that seem worthy of consideration at a time when public thought is concentrated upon politics. And to give definite aim to this inquiry I shall state it in the harshest terms possible:

We, a self-governing people, permit our af-

fairs to be administered, very largely, by second-rate men.

Our hearts throb indignantly as we ponder this. The types have a queer look. Such an accusation is an unpardonable sin against American institutions—against an intelligent, high-minded citizenry. It can, however, do no harm to view the matter from various angles to determine whether anything really may be adduced in support of it.

## II

In theory the weight of the majority is with the fit. This is the pleasantest of ideas, but it is not true. It is not true at least in so great a number of contests as to justify any virtuous complacency in the electorate. It is probably no more untrue now than in other years, though the cumulative effect of a long experience of government by the unfit is having its effect upon the nation in discouraging faith in that important and controlling function of government that has to do with the choice and election of candidates. Only rarely—and I speak

carefully—do the best men possible for a given office ever reach it. The best men are never even considered for thousands of State, county, and municipal elective offices; they do not offer themselves, either because office-holding is distasteful, or because private business is more lucrative, or because they are aware of no demand for their services on the part of their fellow citizens. By fitness I mean the competence produced by experience and training, fortified with moral character and a sense of responsibility. I should say that a fit man for public office is one who in his private affairs has established a reputation for efficiency and trustworthiness.

In assuming that a democracy like ours presupposes in the electorate a desire, no matter how feeble, to intrust public affairs to men of fitness, to first-rate men, it would seem that with the approach of every presidential campaign numbers of possible candidates would receive consideration as eligible to our highest office. It will be said that just as many candidates were available in 1916 as at any other period in our history, but this is neither con-

clusive nor heartening: there should be more! It cannot be pretended that public service does not attract thousands of men; it can, however, be complained that the offices fall very largely to the inferior.

We have just witnessed the spectacle of a great republic, which confides the broadest powers to its chief executive, strangely limited in its choice of candidates for the presidency to a handful of men. No new commanding figure had sprung forward from the ranks of either party in the most trying period the country has known in fifty years. If Mr. Wilson's renomination had not been inevitable, it would be very difficult to name another Democrat who, by virtue of demonstrated strength and public confidence, would have been able to enter the lists against him. Our only Democratic Presidents since the Civil War stepped from a governor's seat to the higher office; but I know of no Democratic governor who, in 1916, could have entered the national convention supported by any appreciable public demand for his nomination. And no Democratic senator could have debated Mr. Wilson's claims

to further recognition. Speaker Clark, with the prestige of his maximum five hundred and fifty-six votes on the tenth ballot of the Baltimore Convention, might have been able to reappear at St. Louis with a similar showing; but the Democratic range of possibilities certainly had not widened. To be sure, Mr. Bryan would have remained to reckon with; but, deeply as the party and the country is indebted to him for his courageous stand against the bosses at Baltimore, he could hardly have received a fourth nomination.

The Republicans were in no better case when their convention met at Chicago. The Old Guard was stubbornly resolved, not only that Mr. Roosevelt should not be nominated, but that he should not dictate the choice of a Republican candidate. A short distance from the scene of their deliberations, the Progressives, having failed to establish themselves as a permanent contestant of the older parties, tenaciously clung to their leader. Mr. Roosevelt's effort to interest the Republicans in Senator Lodge as a compromise candidate fell upon deaf ears. Mr. Hughes's high qualifications may

not be seriously questioned. He is a first-rate man, and the lack of enthusiasm with which his nomination was received by the perfectly ordered and controlled body of delegates is not to his discredit. Sore beset, the Old Guard put forth a candidate little to their taste, one who, if elected, would, we must assume, prove quite impatient of the harness fashioned for Presidents by the skilled armorers of the good old days of backward-looking Republicanism.

In taking from the bench a gentleman who was "out of politics" the Republicans emphasized their lamentable lack of available candidates. Nothing was ever sadder than the roll-call of States for the nomination of "favorite sons." Estimable though these men are, no one could have listened to the nominating speeches and witnessed the subsequent mechanical demonstrations without depression. None of these nominees had the slightest chance; the orators who piped their little lays in praise of them knew they had not; the vast audience that witnessed the proceedings, perfectly aware of the farcical nature of these

banalities, knew they had not, and viewed the show with contemptuous amusement.

The heartiness of the reception accorded Messrs. Depew and Cannon, who were called upon to entertain the audience during a lull in the proceedings, was not without its pathos. They dwelt upon the party's past glories with becoming poignancy. Mr. Borah, tactfully projected as a representative of a newer order of Republicanism, was far less effective. The convention was greatly stirred by no new voice; no new leader flashed upon the stage to quicken it to new and high endeavor. No less inspired or inspiring body of men ever gathered than those who constituted the Republican Convention of 1916.

I asked a successful lawyer the other day how he accounted for the lack of presidential timber. "It's because the average American would rather be president of the Pennsylvania Railroad than of the United States," he answered. And it is true, beyond question, that our highest genius is employed in commerce and business rather than in politics. If we, the people, do not seek means of promoting ad-

ministrative wisdom and efficiency in our government we shall pay one of these days a high price for our indifference. There is danger ahead unless we are disposed to take our politics more seriously, and unless more young men of the best talent and the highest aims can be lured into public life. The present showing is certainly not encouraging as to the future of American statesmanship; and to say that the fit have always been few, is not a particularly consoling answer.

It is true of a period still susceptible of intimate scrutiny—say, from the Civil War—that presidential candidates have been chosen in every case from a small group of potentialities in both parties. We have established (stupidly in any large view of the matter) geographical limitations upon the possible choice that greatly narrow the field. Candidates for the presidency must be chosen with an eye to the local effect, from States essential to success. Though Mr. Blaine's candidacy was surrounded by unusual circumstances, it emphasizes, nevertheless, the importance to the parties of nominating men from the "pivotal" States. We have

had no New England President since Franklin Pierce. This is not because the New England States have not produced men of fitness, but is attributable solely to the small representation of the Northeastern States in the Electoral College.

The South, likewise, has long been eliminated from the reckoning. Though born in Virginia Mr. Wilson is distinctly not "a Southern man" in the familiar connotations of that term. In old times the Southern States contributed men of the first rank to both houses of Congress; but, apart from Mr. Underwood (who received one hundred and seventeen and one-half votes at Baltimore) and Mr. John Sharp Williams, there are no Southerners of conspicuous attainments in the present Senate. The Southern bar embraces now, perhaps as truly as at any earlier period, lawyers of distinguished ability, but they apparently do not find public life attractive.

No President has yet been elected from beyond the Mississippi, though Mr. Bryan, thrice a candidate, widened the area of choice westward. In the present year Governor Johnson

and Senator Borah were the only trans-Mississippi men mentioned as possibilities, and they cut no figure in the contest. We are still a congeries of States, or groups of States, rather than a nation, with a resulting political provincialism that is disheartening when we consider the economic and political power we wield increasingly in world affairs.

It is a serious commentary upon the talent of recent congresses that the House has developed no men so commanding as to awaken speculation as to their availability for the presidency. No member of the House figured this year in Republican presidential speculations. Why do the second-rate predominate in a body that may be called the most typical of our institutions? Lincoln, Hayes, Garfield, Blaine, McKinley, Bryan, all candidates for the presidency, had been members of the House, but it has become negligible as a training-school for Presidents. A year ago Mr. Mann received an occasional honorable mention, but his petulant fling at the President as "playing politics," in the grave hour following the despatch of the final note to Germany, effectually silenced his

admirers. Admirable as partisanship may be, there are times when even an opposition floor-leader should be able to rise above it! Nor is it possible for Democrats to point to Mr. Kitchin with any degree of pride. Of both these men it may be said that never have leaders failed so lamentably to rise to their opportunities. Mr. Hay, of Virginia, Chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs, not only yielded reluctantly to the public pressure for preparedness, but established his unfitness to hold any office by tacking on the army bill a "joker" designed to create a place for a personal friend. Mr. Wilson, like Mr. Cleveland, has found his congresses unruly or wabbly or egregiously stupid, manifesting astonishingly little regard for their party principles or policies. The present majority has been distinguished for nothing so much as impotence and parochialism.

Without respect to party, the average representative's vision is no wider than his district, and he ponders national affairs solely from a selfish standpoint. Through long years we have used him as an errand-boy, a pension agent, a beggar at the national till. His time is

spent in demonstrating to his constituency that when "pork" is being served he is on hand with Oliver Twist's plate. The people of one district, proud of their new post-office, or rejoicing in the appearance of a government contractor's dredge in their creek, do not consider that their devoted congressman, to insure his own success, has been obliged to assist other members in a like pursuit of spoils and that the whole nation bears the burden.

The member who carries a map of his district with him to Washington, and never broadens his horizon, is a relic of simpler times. In days like these we can ill afford to smile with our old tolerance at the "plain man of the people," who is likely to be the cheapest kind of demagogue. A frock coat and a kind heart are not in themselves qualifications for a congressman. Eccentricity, proudly vaunted, whimsicalities of speech, lofty scorn of conventions, have all been sadly overworked. Talent of the first order is needed in Congress; it is no place for men who can't see and think straight.

The Senate preserves at least something of its old competence, and the country respects,

I think, the hard work recently performed by it. While its average is low, it contains men—some of them little in the public eye—who are specialists in certain fields. There is, I believe, a general feeling that, with our tremendous industrial and commercial interests, the presence in the upper house of a considerable number of business men and of fewer lawyers would make for a better balanced and more representative body. A first-rate senator need not be an orator. The other day, when Senator Taggart, a new member, protested vigorously against the latest river-and-harbor swindle the country applauded. Refreshing, indeed, to hear a new voice in those sacred precincts raised against waste and plunder! Senator Oliver, of Pennsylvania, a protectionist, of course, is probably as well informed on the tariff as any man in America. I give him the benefit of this advertisement the more cheerfully as I do not agree with his views; but his information is entitled to all respect. The late David Turpie, of Indiana, by nature a recluse, and one of the most unassuming men who ever sat in the Senate, was little known to the country at

large. I once heard Mr. Roosevelt and Judge Gray of Delaware engage in a most interesting exchange of anecdotes illustrative of Mr. Turpie's wide range of information. He was a first-rate man. There is room in the Senate for a great variety of talent, and its efficiency is not injured by the frequent injection of new blood. What the country is impatient of in the upper house is dead men who have little information and no opinions of value on any subject. The election of senators directly by the people will have in November its first trial—another step toward pure democracy. We shall soon be able to judge whether the electorate, acting independently, is more to be trusted than the legislatures.

I should be sorry to apply any words of President Wilson in a quarter where he did not intend them, but a paragraph of his address to the Washington correspondents (May 15) might well be taken to heart by a number of gentlemen occupying seats in the legislative branch of the government.

"I have a profound intellectual contempt for men who cannot see the signs of the times. I

have to deal with some men who know no more of the modern processes of politics than if they were living in the eighteenth century, and for them I have a profound and comprehensive intellectual contempt. They are blind; they are hopelessly blind; and the worst of it is I have to spend hours of my time talking to them when I know before I start, quite as though I had finished, that it is absolutely useless to talk to them. I am talking *in vacuo*."

There are, indisputably, limitations upon the patience of a first-rate man engaged in the trying occupation of attempting to communicate a first-rate idea to a second-rate mind.

## III

In recent years our periodical literature has devoted much space to discussions of problems of efficiency. We have heard repeatedly of the demand, not for two-thousand-dollar men, but for ten, twenty, and fifty thousand dollar men, in the great industries. The efficiency engineer has sprung into being; in my own city several hundred employees of an automobile company

are organized into a class, of which a professor of psychology is the leader, the purpose being the promotion of individual and corporate efficiency. The first-rate man is in demand as a buyer, a salesman, a foreman, a manager. One of the largest corporations in America pays its employees bonuses apportioned on a basis of their value as demonstrated by actual performances from month to month. The minutest economies are a matter of daily study in every manufacturing and commercial house; the hunt for the first-rate man is unceasing. Executive ability, a special genius for buying and selling, need never go unrecognized. Recently a New York bank spent months searching for a bond-seller and finally chose an obscure young man from a Western town who fell by chance under the eye of a "scout" sent out to look for talent. But this eager search for the first-rate man, so marked in commerce and industry, only rarely touches our politics. It is only in politics that the second-rate man finds the broadest field for the exercise of his talents.

A President is beset by many embarrassments in the exercise of the appointing power.

Our feudal system, by which senators and representatives are the custodians of post-office, district attorneyships, marshalships, and countless other positions, does not make for the recognition of the fit. While the power to appoint is vested in the executive, his choice must be approved by the senators or representatives. As the system operates, it is not really the President who appoints but the senators or representatives, and the President is expected to meet their wishes. To question their recommendations is to arouse animosity, and where the fate of important legislation hangs in the balance a President is under strong temptation to accept the recommendation of second-rate men in order to keep the members of the law-making bodies in good humor.

In the professions and industries, in commercial houses, even on the farm, the second-rate man is not wanted; but political jobs, high and low, are everywhere open to him. Everything but the public service is standardized; politics alone puts a premium upon inferiority. The greatest emphasis is laid upon the word service in every field but government.

The average American "wants what he wants when he wants it," and is proud of his ability to get it. "If it isn't right, we make it right," is a popular business slogan. Hotels whose indifferent service wins the displeasure of the travelling public are execrated and blacklisted. On the other hand, I have listened for hours to the laudation of good hotels, of the efficiency of railroads, of automobile manufacturers who "give good service." We have a pride in these things; we like to relate incidents of our successful "kick" when the berth that we had reserved by telegraph wasn't forthcoming and how we "took it up" with the railroad authorities, and how quickly our wounded feelings were poulticed. "I guess that won't happen again on *that* road!" we chortle. Conversely we make our errands to a city hall or court-house as few as possible, knowing that the "service," offered at the people's expense is of a different order, and public officials may not be approached in that confident spirit with which we carry our needs or complaints to the heads of a private business.

Or, if some favor is to be asked, we brag

that we have seen "Jim" or "Bob" and that he "fixed" it for us. It happens not infrequently that we want something "fixed" from purely selfish motives—something that should not be "fixed"—and it gives us a pleasurable sense of our "influence" to know that, as we have always treated "Jim" or "Bob" all right, "Jim" or "Bob" cheerfully assists us. We chuckle over the ease with which he accomplished the fixing where it would have been impossible for us to effect it through a direct legitimate appeal. Thus in hundreds of ways a boss, great or small, is able to grant favors that cost him nothing, thereby blurring the vision of those he places under obligations to the means by which he gains his power.

In municipal government the second and the third rate man, on down to a point where differentiations fade to the vanishing point, finds his greatest hope and security. As first-rate men are not available for the offices, they fall naturally to the inferior, the incompetent, or the corrupt. In few cities of a hundred thousand population is a man of trained ability and recognized fitness ever seriously considered

for the mayoralty. Modern city government, with the broad powers conferred upon mayors, requires intelligence of the highest order. Usually without experience in large affairs, and crippled by a well-established tradition that he must reward party workers and personal friends, the incumbent surrounds himself with second and third rate men, for whose blunders the taxpayer meekly pays the bills.

The mayor's office is hardly second to the presidency in the variety of its perplexities. A man of the best intentions will fail to satisfy a whole community. There is in every city a group of reformers who believe that a mayor should be able to effect the moral regeneration of the human race in one term of office. The first-rate man is aware of this, and the knowledge diminishes his anxiety to seek the place. A common indictment against the capable man who volunteers for municipal service is that his ignorance of political methods would make him "impractical" if he were elected. This sentiment is expressed frequently—often by large taxpayers. The insinuation is that a man of character and ideals would be unable to

deal with the powers that prey by indirection. This is quite true: the fit man, the first-rate man, who would undertake the office untrammelled by political obligations, would not know the "good fellows" who must be dealt with in a spirit of leniency. This delicate duty is more safely intrusted to one who brings a certain sympathy to bear upon the task.

Whatever may be the merits of party government in its national application, there is no sound argument for its continuance in municipal affairs. Its effect is to discourage utterly, in most communities, any effort the first-rate man may be absurd enough to make to win enough of the franchises of his fellow citizens to land him in the mayoralty. On one occasion a Republican United States senator, speaking for his party's candidate for the mayoralty at the last rally of a campaign in my own city, declared that his party must win, as defeat would have a discouraging effect on Republicans elsewhere. A few years ago both parties chose, in the Indianapolis primaries, mayoralty candidates of conspicuous unfitness. The Republican candidate was an auctioneer, whose ready

tongue and drolleries on the stump made him the central figure in a highly picturesque campaign. He was elected and the affairs of a city of a quarter of a million people were cheerfully turned over to him. Ignorant of the very terminology in which municipal affairs are discussed, he avoided embarrassment by remaining away from his office as much as possible. In the last year of his administration—if so dignified a term may be applied to his incumbency—he resigned, to avoid the responsibility of dealing with disorders consequent upon a serious strike, and took refuge on the vaudeville stage. He was no more unfit on the day he resigned than on the day of his nomination or election—a fact of which the electorate had ample knowledge. He was chosen merely because he was a vote-getter. Republicans voted for him to preserve their regularity.*

I am prolonging these comments on municipal government for the reason that the city as a political factor is of so great influence in the State and nation, and because the domination of the unfit in the smaller unit offers

*This gentleman again captured the Republican nomination for mayor of Indianapolis in the May primary, 1921.

more tangible instances for study. The impediments encountered by the fit who offer themselves for public service are many, and often ludicrous. Twice, in Indianapolis, men of the best standing have yielded under pressure to a demand that they offer themselves for the Republican mayoralty nomination. Neither had the slightest intention of using the mayoralty as a stepping-stone to higher office; the motives animating both were the highest. One of them was quickly disposed of by the report sent "down the line" that he had not been as regular as he might be, and by this token was an undesirable candidate. The other was subjected to a crushing defeat in the primary. There was nothing against him except that he was unknown to the "boys in the trenches."

From the window by which I write I can see the chimneys of the flourishing industry conducted by the first of these gentlemen. He has constantly shown his public spirit in the most generous fashion; he is an admirable citizen. I dare say there is not an incompetent man or woman on his pay-roll. If he were out

of employment and penniless to-morrow, scores of responsible positions would be open to him. But the public would not employ him; his own party would not even permit its membership to express its opinion of him; and had he gone before the electorate he would in all likelihood have been defeated by an invincible combination of every element of incompetence and venality in the city.

The other gentleman, who began life as a bank clerk, made a success of a commercial business, and is now president of one of the largest banks in the State. Such men are ineligible for municipal office; they are first-rate men; the very fact that they are men of character and ability who could be trusted to manage public affairs as they conduct their private business, removes them at once from consideration.

Such experiences as these are not calculated to encourage the capable man, the first-rate man, to attempt to gain a public position. In fact, it is the business of political organizations to make the defeat of such men as humiliating as possible. They must be got rid of; they must be taught better manners!

The good nature with which we accept the second-rate man in municipal office is one of the most bewildering of all our political phenomena. "Well, things have always been this way, and I guess they always will be," expresses the average citizen's feeling about the matter. As he cannot, without much personal discomfort, change the existing order, he finds solace in the reflection that he couldn't do anything about it if he tried. The more intolerant he is of second-rate employees in his own business, the more supinely he views the transfer of public business from one set of incompetents to another.

To lift municipal government out of politics in States where the party organizations never shut up shop but are ceaselessly plotting and planning to perfect their lines, is manifestly no easy task, but it may be accomplished by effective leadership where the people are sincerely interested. And it is significant that the present movement for an abandonment of the old pernicious, costly system took rise from the dire calamities that befell two cities—Galveston and Dayton—which were suddenly confronted with problems that it would have

been madness to intrust to incompetents. This illustrates a point overlooked by that large body of Americans who refuse to bring to their politics the test of fitness that they enforce in private business. The second-rate man may successfully hide his errors in normal conditions, but his faults and weaknesses become glaringly apparent when any severe demands are made upon him.

I can suggest no permanent solution of the problem of municipal government that does not embrace the training of men for its particular duties. A development of the city-manager plan, of nation-wide scope, fortified by special courses of training in schools able to give the dignity of a stable profession to municipal administration may ultimately be the remedy.

## IV

The debauchery of young men by the bosses is a familiar phase of our politics and is most potent in the game of checking the advance of the fit and assuring domination by the unfit. Several thousand young men leave college

every year with some hope of entering upon a political career. By the time a young man is graduated he has elected to follow the banner of some party. If he lives in a city and shows a disposition to be of practical service, he is warmly welcomed into the fold of one of the organizations. He quickly becomes aware that only by the display of a servile obedience can he expect to become *persona grata* to the party powers. By the time he has passed through one campaign as a trusted member of a machine, his political illusions are well-nigh destroyed. His childish belief that only the fit should be elevated to positions of responsibility, that public office is a public trust, is pretty well dissipated. "Good" men, he finds, are good only by the tests of partisanship as applied by the bosses. To strike at a boss is *lésé majesté*, and invites drastic punishment.

The purpose of the young men's political clubs everywhere is to infuse the young voter with the spirit of blind obedience and subjection. He is graciously permitted to serve on club committees as a step toward more important recognition as ward committeeman, or he

is given a place of some sort at headquarters during the campaign. There are dozens of ways in which the willing young man may be of use. His illusions rapidly vanish. He is flattered by the attentions of the bosses, who pat him on the back and assure him that they appreciate his loyal devotion to the party. With the hope of preferment before him it is essential that he establish as quickly as possible a reputation for "regularity." If his wise elders note any restiveness, any tendency toward independence, they at once warn him that he must "play the game straight," and shut his eyes to the sins of his party. Or if his counsellors sympathize with his predicament they advise him that the only way he can gain a position from which to make his ideas effective is by winning the favor of the bosses and building up a personal following.

In a campaign preliminary to a local primary in my city I appealed to a number of young men of good antecedents and rather exceptional education, to oppose a particular candidate. One of them, on coming home from an Eastern university, had introduced himself

to me in the name of a great educator who was one of my particular admirations. In every one of these cases I was politely rebuffed. They said the gentleman whose ambitions annoyed me was a "good fellow" and "all right"; they couldn't see that any good would come of antagonizing him. And they were right. No good did come of it so far as the result was concerned.

There are countless ways in which a young lawyer finds his connection with a machine helpful. A word in the right quarter brings him a client—a saloonkeeper, perhaps, who is meeting with resistance in his effort to secure a renewal of his license; or petty criminal cases before magistrates—easily arranged where the machine controls the police. He cannot fail to be impressed with the perfection of a system that so smoothly wields power by indirection. The mystery of it all and the potency of the names of the high powers appeal to his imagination; there is something of romance in it. A deputyship in the office of the prosecuting attorney leads on to a seat in the legislature, and he may go to Congress if he is "good." He is purchased with a price, bought, and paid for; his status

is fixed; he is a second-rate man. And by every such young man in America the ideal of democracy, the hope of republican government, is just so much weakened.

## V

Government by the unfit, domination by the inferior, is greatly assisted by a widely accepted superstition that a second-rate man, finding himself in a position of responsibility, is likely to display undreamed of powers. The idea seems to be that the electorate, by a kind of laying on of hands, confers fitness where none has previously existed. Unfortunately such miracles are not frequent enough to form the basis of a political philosophy. Recourse to the recall as a means of getting rid of an undesirable office-holder strikes me as only likely to increase the indifference, the languor, with which we now perform our political duties.

Contempt for the educated man, a preposterous assumption that by the very fact of his training he is unfitted for office, continues prevalent in many minds. Conscious of this

disqualification, President Wilson finds amusement at times in referring to himself as a schoolmaster; much criticism of his administration is based upon the melancholy fact that he is a "professor," a scholar, as though a lifelong student of history and politics were disqualified, by the very fact of his preparation, for exalted office.

The direct primary, as a means of assisting first-rate men to office, has not yet realized what was hoped for it, and there is growing scepticism as to its efficacy. It is one of our marked national failings that we expect laws and systems to work automatically. If the first-rate man cherishes the delusion that he need only offer himself to his fellow partisans and they will delightedly spring to his support, he is doomed to a sad awakening. Unless he has taken the precaution to ask the organization's permission to put his name on the ballot and is promised support, he must perfect an organization of his own with which to make his fight in the primary. He must open headquarters from which to carry on his operations, make speeches before as many

citizens as can be assembled to hear him, enlist and pay helpers, most of whom expect jobs in case he is successful. He must drop money into palms of whose existence he never dreamed, the recipients of his bounty being frequently "scouts" from his opponents' camps. The blackmailing of candidates by charitable organizations—and churches are not without shame in this particular—is only one of the thousand annoyances. He is not likely to enjoy immunity from newspaper attack. Months of time and much money are required for a primary campaign. I venture the assertion that many hundreds of candidates for office in this year of grace began their campaigns for election already encumbered by debts incurred in winning their nominations, which brought them only half-way to the goal. Such a burden, with all its connotations of curtailed liberty and shackling obligations, may not be viewed with equanimity. Instead of making office-holding more attractive to the first-rate man, the direct primary multiplies his discouragements.

The second-rate man, being willing to accept office as a party, not a public, trust, and

to use it in every way possible for the strengthening of party lines, has the first-rate man, who has only his merits to justify his ambitions, at a serious disadvantage. When an organization (the term by which a machine prefers to be called) finds that it is likely to meet with defeat through public resentment of its excesses, it will sometimes turn to a first-rate man. But this is only in cases of sheer desperation. There is nothing more amusing than the virtuous air with which a machine will nominate a first-rate man where there is no possible danger of party success. He it is whom the bosses are willing to sacrifice. The trick is turned ingeniously to the bosses' advantage, for defeat in such instances proves to the truly loyal that only the "regulars" can get anywhere.

A young friend of mine once persuaded me to join him in "bucking" a primary for the election of delegates to a State convention. I cheerfully lent my assistance in this laudable enterprise, the more readily when he confided to me his intention of employing machine methods. A young man of intelligence and humor, he had, by means which I deplored but to which I con-

tributed, lured from the organization one of its star performers. I speak of this without shame, that the cynical may not complain that I am in politics a high brow or dreamy lotus eater. Our ally knew the game; he knew how to collect and deliver votes by the most approved machine methods. We watched him work with the keenest satisfaction. He brought citizens in great numbers to vote our "slate," many of them men who had never been in the ward before. We gloated with satisfaction as the day declined and our votes continued to pile up. Our moral natures were in the balance; if we beat the machine with machine methods we meant never, never to be good again! It seemed indeed that our investment in the skilled worker could not fail of success. When the votes were counted, oh, what a fall was there, my countrymen! "Our man" had merely used our automobiles, and I refrain from saying what other munitions of war, to get out the vote of the opposition! We had in other words, accomplished our own defeat!

## VI

The past year has been marked by the agitation for military preparedness; civil preparedness strikes me as being of equal importance. If I am right—or only half right—in my assertion that we are governed very largely by second-rate men and that public business is confided chiefly to the unfit, then here is a matter that cannot be ignored by those who look forward hopefully to the future of American democracy. There are more dangers within than without, and our tame acceptance of incompetence in civil office would certainly bring calamity if suffered in a military establishment. The reluctance of first-rate men to accept or seek office is more disquieting than the slow enlistments in the army and navy. Competence in the one would do much to assure intelligent foresight and efficiency in the other.

It is a disturbing thought that we, the people, really care so little, and that we are so willing to suffer government by the second-rate, only murmuring despairingly when the unhappy

results of our apathy bring us sharply face to face with failure.

"The fatalism of the multitude," commented upon strikingly by Lord Bryce, has established in us the superstition that a kindly providence presides over our destinies and that "everything will come out right in the end." But government by good luck is not a safe reliance for a nation of a hundred millions. Nothing in history supports a blind faith in numbers or in the wisdom of majorities. America's hope lies in the multiplication of the fit—the saving remnant of Isaiah's prophecies and Plato's philosophy—a doctrine applied to America by Matthew Arnold, who remains one of the shrewdest and most penetrating of all our critics. Mr. Arnold distrusted numbers and had no confidence in majorities. He said:

> To be a voice outside the state, speaking to mankind or to the future, perhaps shaking the actual state to pieces in doing so, one man will suffice. But to reform the state in order to save it, to preserve it by changing it, a body of workers is needed as well as a leader—a considerable body of workers, placed at many points, and operating in many directions.

These days, amid "the thunder of the captains, and the shouting," there must be many thousands of Americans who are truly of the saving remnant, who view public matters soberly and hold as something very fine and precious our heritage of democracy. These we may suppose will witness the dawn of election day with a lively apprehension of their august responsibilities, and exercise their right of selection sanely and wisely. "They only who build upon ideas, build for eternity," wrote Emerson.

This nation was founded on ideas, and clearly in the ideas of the fit, the earnest, the serious, lies its hope for the future. To eliminate the second-rate, to encourage the first-rate man to undertake offices of responsibility and power—such must be the immediate concern and the urgent business of all who love America.

# THE LADY OF LANDOR LANE

## I

"TAKE your choice; I have bungalows to burn," said the architect.

He and his ally, the real-estate man, had been unduly zealous in the planting of bungalows in the new addition beyond the college. About half of them remained unsold, and purchasers were elusive. A promised extension of the trolley-line had not materialized; and half a dozen houses of the bungalow type, scattered along a ridge through which streets had been hacked in the most brutal fashion, spoke for the sanguine temper of the projectors of Sherwood Forest. The best thing about the new streets was their names, which were a testimony to the fastidious taste of a professor in the college who had frequently thundered in print against our ignoble American nomenclature.

It was hoped that Sherwood Forest would prove particularly attractive to newly married

folk of cultivation, who spoke the same social language. There must, therefore, be a Blackstone Road, as a lure for struggling lawyers; a Lister Avenue, to tickle the imagination of young physicians; and Midas Lane, in which the business man, sitting at his own hearth side far from the jarring city, might dream of golden harvests. To the young matron anxious to keep in touch with art and literature, what could have been more delightful than the thought of receiving her mail in Emerson Road, Longfellow Lane, Audubon Road, or any one of a dozen similar highways (if indeed the new streets might strictly be so called) almost within sound of the college bell? The college was a quarter of a mile away, and yet near enough to shed its light upon this new colony that had risen in a strip of forest primeval, which, as the promoting company's circulars more or less accurately recited, was only thirty minutes from lobsters and head lettuce.

This was all a year ago, just as August haughtily relinquished the world to the sway of September. I held the chair of applied sociology in the college, and had taken a year off

to write a number of articles for which I had long been gathering material. It had occurred to me that it would be worth while to write a series of sociological studies in the form of short stories. My plan was to cut small cross-sections in the social strata of the adjoining city, in the suburban village which embraced the college, and in the adjacent farm region, and attempt to portray, by a nice balancing of realism and romance, the lives of the people in the several groups I had been observing. I had talked to an editor about it and he had encouraged me to try my hand.

I felt enough confidence in the scheme to risk a year's leave, and I now settled down to my writing zestfully. I had already submitted three stories, which had been accepted in a cordial spirit that proved highly stimulating to further endeavor, and the first of the series, called *The Lords of the Round House*—a sketch of the domestic relationships and social conditions of the people living near the railroad shops—had been commented on favorably as a fresh and novel view of an old subject. My second study dealt with a settlement sustained

by the canning industry, and under the title, *Eros and the Peach Crop*, I had described the labors and recreations of this community honestly, and yet with a degree of humor.

As a bachelor professor I had been boarding near the college with the widow of a minister; but now that I was giving my time wholly to writing I found this domicile intolerable. My landlady, admirable woman though she was, was altogether too prone to knock at my door on trifling errands. When I had filled my note-book with memoranda for a sketch dealing with the boarding-house evil (it has lately appeared as *Charging What the Onion Will Bear*), I resolved to find lodgings elsewhere. And besides, the assistant professor of natural sciences occupied a room adjoining mine, and the visits of strange *reptilia* to my quarters were far from stimulating to literary labor.

I had long been immensely curious as to those young and trusting souls who wed in the twenties, establish homes, and, unterrified by cruel laws enacted for the protection of confiding creditors, buy homes on the instalment plan, keep a cow, carry life insurance,

buy theatre tickets, maintain a baby, and fit as snugly into the social structure as though the world were made for them alone. In my tramps about the city I had marked with professional interest the appearance of great colonies of bungalows which had risen within a few years, and which spoke with an appealing eloquence for an obstinate confidence in the marriage tie. In my late afternoon excursions through these sprightly suburban regions I had gazed with the frankest admiration upon wholly charming young persons stepping blithely along new cement walks, equipped with the neatest of card-cases, or bearing embroidered bags of sewing; and maids in the smartest of caps opened doors to them. Through windows guarded by the whitest of draperies, I had caught glimpses of our native forests as transformed into the sturdiest of arts-and-crafts furniture. Both flower and kitchen gardens were squeezed into compact plots of earth; a Gerald or a Geraldine cooed from a perambulator at the gate of at least every other establishment; and a "syndicate" man-of-all-work moved serenely from furnace to furnace, from

lawn to lawn, as the season determined. On Sundays I saw the young husbands hieing to church, to a golf-links somewhere, to tennis in some vacant lot, or aiding their girlish wives in the cheerfulest fashion imaginable to spray rose-bushes or to drive the irrepressible dandelion from the lawn of its delight.

These phenomena interested me more than I can say. My aim was not wholly sociological, for not only did I wish in the spirit of strictest scientific inquiry to understand just how all this was possible, but the sentimental aspect of it exercised a strange fascination upon me. When I walked these new streets at night and saw lamps lighted in dozens of cheery habitations, with the lord and lady of the bungalow reading or talking in greatest contentment; or when their voices drifted out to me from nasturtium-hung verandas on summer evenings, I was in danger of ceasing to be a philosopher and of going over bodily to the sentimentalists. Then, the scientific spirit mastering, I vulgarly haunted the doors of the adjacent shops and communed with grocers' boys and drug clerks, that I might gain data

upon which to base speculations touching this species, this "group," which presented so gallant a front in a world where bills are payable not later than the tenth of every calendar month.

"You may have the brown bungalow in Audubon Road, the gray one in Washington Hedge, or the dark green one in Landor Lane. Take any one you like; they all offer about the same accommodations," said the architect. "You can put such rent as you see fit in the nearest squirrel box, and if you meet an intending purchaser with our prospectus in his hand I expect you to take notice and tease him to buy. We've always got another bungalow somewhere, so you won't be thrown in the street."

I chose Landor Lane for a variety of reasons. There were as yet only three houses in the street, and this assured a degree of peace. Many fine forest trees stood in the vacant lots, and a number had been suffered to remain within the parking retained between sidewalk and curb, mitigating greatly the harsh lines of the new addition. But I think the deciding factor

was the name of the little street. Landor had always given me pleasure, and while it is possible that a residence in Huxley Avenue might have been more suitable for a seeker of truth, there was the further reflection that truth, touched with the iridescent glow of romance, need suffer nothing from contact with the spirit of Walter Savage Landor.

Directly opposite my green bungalow was a dark brown one flung up rather high above the lane. The promoters of the addition had refrained from smoothing out the landscape, so that the brown bungalow was about twenty feet above the street, while my green one was reached by only half a dozen steps.

On the day that I made my choice I saw a child of three playing in the grass plot before the brown bungalow. It was Saturday afternoon, and the typical young freeholder was doing something with an axe near the woodshed, and even as I surveyed the scene the domestic picture was completed by the appearance of the inevitable young woman, who came from the direction of the trolley-terminus, carrying the usual neat card-case in

her hand. Here was exactly what I wanted—a chance to study at close hand the bungalow type, and yet, Landor Lane was so quiet, its trio of houses so distributed, that I might enjoy that coveted detachment so essential to contemplative observation and wise judgments.

"I've forgotten," mused the architect, as we viewed the scene together, "whether the chap in that brown bungalow is Redmond, the patent lawyer, or Manderson, the tile-grate man. There's a baby of about the same vintage at both houses. If that isn't Redmond over there showing Gladstonian prowess with the axe, it's Manderson. Woman with child and cart; number 58; West Gallery; artist unknown." It pleased my friend's humor to quote thus from imaginary catalogues. "Well, I don't know whether those are the Redmonds or the Mandersons; but come to think of it, Redmond isn't a lawyer, but the inventor of a new office system by which profit and loss are computed hourly by a device so simple that any child may operate it. A man of your cloistral habits won't care about the neighbors, but I hope that chap isn't Redmond. A man who will

think up a machine like that isn't one you'd expose perfectly good garden hose to, on dark summer nights."

## II

A Japanese boy who was working his way through college offered to assume the responsibilities of my housekeeping for his board. Banzai brought to the task of cooking the deft hand of his race. He undertook the purchase of furniture to set me up in the bungalow, without asking questions—in itself a great relief. In a week's time he announced that all was in readiness for my transfer, so that I made the change quite casually, without other impedimenta than a portfolio and a suitcase.

On that first evening, as Banzai served my supper—he was a past master of the omelet—I enjoyed a peace my life had not known before. In collecting material for my earlier sketches I had undeniably experienced many discomforts and annoyances; but here was an adventure which could hardly fail to prove pleasant and profitable.

As I loafed with my pipe after supper, I re-

solved to make the most of my good fortune and perfect a study of the bungalow as an expression of American civilization which should be the final word on that enthralling subject. I was myself, so to speak, a bungaloyd—the owner or occupant of a bungalow—and while I was precluded by my state of bachelorhood from entering fully into the life which had so aroused my curiosity, I was nevertheless confident that I should be able to probe deeply and sympathetically into the secret of the bungalow's happiness.

Having arranged my books and papers I sought the open. Banzai had secured some porch furniture of a rustic pattern, but he had neglected to provide pillows, and as the chairs of hickory boughs were uncomfortable, I strolled out into the lane. As I stood in the walk, the door of the brown bungalow opened and a man came forth and descended to the street. It was a clear night with an abundance of stars, and the slim crescent of a young moon hung in the west. My neighbor struck a match and drew the flame into his pipe in four or five deliberate inhalations. In the match-flare I

saw his face, which impressed me as sombre, though this may have been the effect of his dark, close-trimmed beard. He stood immovable for five minutes or more, then strolled aimlessly away down the lane.

Looking up, I saw a green-shaded lamp aglow in the front window of the bungalow, and almost immediately the young wife opened the door and came out hastily, anxiously. She ran half-way down the steps, with the light of the open door falling upon her, and after a hurried glance to right and left called softly, "Tom!"

"Tom," she repeated more loudly; then she ran back into the house and reappeared, flinging a wrap over her shoulders, and walked swiftly away in the direction taken by the lord of the bungalow.

Could it be possible, I pondered, that the happiness I had attributed to bungalow folk was after all of such stuff as dreams are made of? There had been almost a sob in that second cry of "Tom!" and I resented it. The scene was perfectly set; the green-shaded lamp had been lighted, ready for that communing of

two souls which had so deeply moved and interested me as I had ranged the land of the bungalow; yet here was a situation which rose blackly in my imagination. I was surprised to find how quickly I took sides in this unhappy drama; I was all for the woman. The glimpse I had caught of her, tripping homeward in the lane, swinging her card-case, had been wholly pleasing; and I recalled the joyous quick rush with which she had clasped her child. I was sure that Tom was a monster, eccentric, selfish, indifferent. There had been a tiff, and he had gone off to sulk in the dark like a wilful, perverse child.

I was patrolling my veranda half an hour later, when I heard steps and then voices on the walk opposite, and back they came. It is a woman's way, I reflected, to make all the advances; and this young wife had captured the runaway and talked him into good humor. A moment later they were seated beside the table in the living-room, and so disposed that the lamp did not obscure them from each other. She was reading aloud, and occasionally glanced up, whether to make sure of his attention or

to comment upon the book I did not know; and when it occurred to me that it was neither dignified nor decent to watch my neighbors through their window, I went indoors and wrote several pages of notes for a chapter which I now felt must be written, on "Bungalow Shadows."

Manderson was the name; Banzai made sure of this at the grocer's. As I took the air of the lane the next morning before breakfast, I saw that the Redmonds were a different sort. Redmond, a big fellow, with a loud voice, was bidding his wife and child good-by. The youngster toddled after him, the wife ran after the child, and there was much laughter. They all stopped to inspect me, and Redmond introduced himself and shook hands, with the baby clutching his knees. He presented me to his wife, and they cordially welcomed me to the lane to the baby's cooing accompaniment. They restored me to confidence in the bungalow type; no doubt of the Redmonds being the real thing!

## III

The lady of the brown bungalow was, however, far more attractive than her sister of the red one, and the Mandersons as a family were far more appealing than the Redmonds. My note-book filled with memoranda touching the ways and manners of the Mandersons, and most of these, I must confess, related to Mrs. Manderson. She was exactly the type I sought, the veritable *dea ex machina* of the bungalow world. She lived a good deal on her veranda, and as I had established a writing-table on mine I was able to add constantly to my notes by the mere lifting of my eyes. I excused my impudence in watching her on scientific grounds. She was no more to me than a new bird to an ornithologist, or a strange plant to a botanist.

Occasionally she would dart into the house and attack an upright piano that stood by the broad window of the living-room. I could see the firm clean stroke of her arms as she played. Those brilliant, flashing, golden things of Chopin's she did wonderfully; or again it would

be Schumann's spirit she invoked. Once begun, she would run on for an hour, and Banzai would leave his kitchen and crouch on our steps to listen. She appeared at times quite fearlessly with a broom to sweep the walk, and she seemed to find a childish delight in sprinkling the lawn. Or she would set off, basket in hand, for the grocer's, and would return bearing her own purchases and none the less a lady for a' that. There was about her an indefinable freshness and crispness. I observed with awe her succession of pink and blue shirt waists, in which she caught and diffused the sun like a figure in one of Benson's pictures; and when she danced off with her card-case in a costume of solid white, and with a flappy white hat, she was not less than adorable.

Manderson nodded to me the second day, a little coldly, as we met in the walk; and thereafter bowed or waved a hand when I fell under his eye. One evening I heard him calling her across the dusk of the yard. Her name was Olive, and nothing, it seemed to me, was ever more fitting than that.

One morning as I wrote at my table on the

veranda I was aroused by a commotion over the way. The girl of all work appeared in the front yard screaming and wringing her hands, and I rushed across the lane to learn that the water-heater was possessed of an evil spirit and threatened to burst. The lady of the bungalow had gone to town and the peril was imminent. I reversed all the visible valves, in that trustful experimental spirit which is the flower of perfect ignorance, and the catastrophe was averted. I returned to my work, became absorbed, and was only aroused by a tug at my smoking-jacket. Beside me stood the Manderson baby, extending a handful of dahlias! Her manner was of ambassadorial gravity. No word was spoken, and she trotted off, laboriously descended my steps, and toddled across the lane.

Her mother waited at the curb, and as I bowed in my best manner, holding up the dahlias, she called, "Thank you!" in the most entrancing of voices. Mr. James declares that the way one person looks at another may be, in effect, an incident; and how much more may "Thank you," flung across a quiet street,

have the weight of hours of dialogue! Her voice was precisely the voice that the loveliest of feminine names connotes, suggesting Tennysonian harmonies and cadences, and murmuring waters of——

"Sweet Catullus's all-but-island, olive-silvery Sirmio."

A bunch of dahlias was just the epistolary form to which a bungalow lady would resort in communicating with a gentleman she did not know. The threatened explosion of the heater had thus served to introduce me to my neighbor, and had given me at the same time a new revelation of her sense of the proprieties, her graciousness, and charm. In my visit to the house I had observed its appointments with a discreet but interested eye, and I jotted down many notes with her dahlias on the table before me. The soft tints of the walls, the well-chosen American rugs, the comfort that spoke in the furniture reflected a consistent taste. There was the usual den, with a long bench piled with cushions, and near at hand a table where a tray of smoker's articles was hedged in with magazines, and there were books neatly

shelved, and others, lying about, testified to familiar use. The upright piano, by the window of my frequent contemplation, bore the imprimatur of one of the most reputable makers, and a tall rack beside it was filled with music. Prone on the player's seat lay a doll—a fact I noted with satisfaction, as evidence of the bungalow baby's supremacy even where its mother is a veritable reincarnation of St. Cecilia.

The same evening Manderson came home in haste and departed immediately with a suitcase. I had hoped that he would follow the dahlias in person to discuss the housemaid's embarrassments with the plumbing and bring me within the arc of his domestic circle, but such was not to be the way of it.

He was gone three days, and while the lady of the bungalow now bowed to me once daily across the lane, our acquaintance progressed no further. Nor, I may add, did my work move forward according to the schedule by which it is my habit to write. I found myself scribbling verses—a relaxation I had not indulged in since my college days. I walked much, sur-

veying the other streets in Sherwood Forest Addition and gloomily comparing them with Landor Lane to their disadvantage. I tramped the shore of the little lake and saw her there once and again, at play with the baby. She and Mrs. Redmond exchanged visits frequently with bungalow informality. One afternoon half a dozen young women appeared for tea on the deep veranda, and the lane was gay with laughter. They were the ladies of the surrounding bungalow district, and their party was the merriest. I wondered whether she had waited for a day when her husband was absent to summon these sisters. It was a gloomy fate that had mated her with a melancholy soul like Manderson.

## IV

I had written several couplets imploring the protection of the gods for the Lady of the Lane, and these I had sketched upon a large sheet of cardboard the better to scrutinize them. And thereby hangs the saddest of revelations. My friend the architect had sent me a number of advertisements with a request that I should

persuade Banzai to attach them to the adjacent landscape. Returning from a tramp I beheld Olive (as I shall not scruple to call her) studying a placard on a telephone-post in the lane a little beyond her bungalow. It struck me as odd that she should be so interested in a mere advertisement of bungalows, when she was already cosily domiciled in the prettiest one the addition boasted. She laughed aloud, then turned guardedly, saw me, and marched demurely home without so much as glancing a second time in my direction.

After she had tripped up the steps and vanished I saw the grievous thing that Banzai had done. By some inadvertence he had thrust the card bearing my verses among the advertisements, and with all the posts and poles and tree-boxes in Christendom to choose from, he had with unconscious malevolence nailed my couplets to the telephone-pole nearest the Manderson bungalow. It was an unpardonable atrocity, the enormity of which I shall not extenuate by suppressing the verses:

"Spirits that guard all lovely things
Bend o'er this path thy golden wings.

Shield it from storms and powers malign:
Make stars and sun above it shine.

May none pass here on evil bent:
Bless it to hearts of good intent,

And when (like some bright catch of song
One hears but once though waiting long)

Lalage suddenly at the door
Views the adoring landscape o'er,

O swift let friendly winds attend
And faithful to her errands bend!

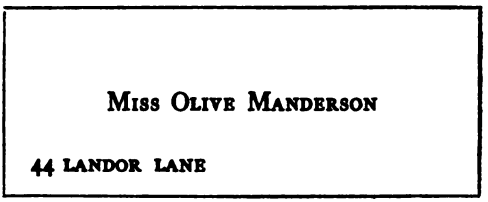
Then when adown the lane she goes
Make leap before her vine and rose!

From elfin land bring Ariel
To walk beside and guard her well.

Defend her, pray, from faun and gnome
Till through the Lane she wanders home!"

It was bad enough to apostrophize my neighbor's wife in song; but to publish my infamy to the world was an even more grievous sin. I tore the thing down, bore it home, and thrust it into the kitchen range before the eyes of the contrite Banzai. Across the way Olive played, and I thought there was mockery in her playing.

Realism is, after all, on much better terms with Romance than the critics would have us believe. If Manderson had not thawed sufficiently to borrow the realistic monkey-wrench which Banzai used on our lawn-mower, and if Olive had not romantically returned it a week later with a card on which she had scribbled "Many apologies for the long delay," I might never have discoveed that she was not in fact Manderson's wife but his sister. Hers was the neatest, the best-bred of cards, and bore the name incontrovertibly——




I throw this to the realists that they may chortle over it in the way of their grim fraternity. Were I cursed with the least taint of romanticism I should not disclose her maiden state at this point, but hold it for stirring dramatic use at the moment when, believing her

to be the wife of the mournful tile-grate man, I should bid her good-by and vanish forever.

The moment that card reacned me by the hand of her housemaid she was playing a Chopin polonaise, and I was across the lane and reverently waiting at the door when the last chord sounded. It was late on an afternoon at the threshold of October, but not too cool for tea *al fresco*. When the wind blew chill from the lake she disappeared, and returned with her hands thrust into the pockets of a white sweater.

It was amazing how well we got on from the first. She explained herself in the fewest words. Her brother's wife had died two years before, and she had helped to establish a home for him in the hope of mitigating his loneliness. She spoke of him and the child with the tenderest consideration. He had been badly broken by his wife's death, and was given to brooding. I accused myself bitterly for having so grossly misjudged him as to think him capable of harshness toward the fair lady of his bungalow. He came while I still sat there and greeted me

amiably, and when I left we were established on the most neighborly footing.

Thenceforth my work prospered. Olive revealed, with the nicest appreciation and understanding of my needs, the joys and sorrows of suburban bungalowhood. The deficiencies of the trolley service, the uncertainties of the grocer's delivery she described in the aptest phrases, her buoyant spirit making light of all such vexations.

The manifold resources and subterfuges of bungalow housekeeping were unfolded with the drollest humor. The eternal procession of cooks, the lapses of the neighborhood hired man, the fitfulness of the electric light—all such tragedies were illuminated with her cheery philosophy. The magazine article that I had planned expanded into a discerning study of the secret which had baffled and lured me, as to the flowering of the bungalow upon the rough edges of the urban world. The aspirations expressed by the upright piano, the perambulator, the new book on the arts-and-crafts table, the card-case borne through innumerable quiet lanes —all such phenomena Olive elucidated for my

instruction. The shrewd economies that explained the occasional theatre tickets; the incubator that robbed the grocer to pay the milliner; the home-plied needle that accounted for the succession of crisp shirt waists—into these and many other mysteries Olive initiated me.

Sherwood Forest suddenly began to boom, and houses were in demand. My architect friend threatened me with eviction, and to avert the calamity I signed a contract of purchase, which bound me and my heirs and assigns forever to certain weekly payments; and, blithe opportunist that I am, I based a chapter on this circumstance, with the caption "Five Dollars a Month for Life." I wrote from notes supplied by Olive a dissertation on "The Pursuit of the Lemon"—suggested by an adventure of her own in search of the fruit of the *citrus limonum* for use in garnishing a plate of canned salmon for Sunday evening tea.

Inspired by the tender, wistful autumn days I wrote verses laboriously, and boldly hung them in the lane in the hope of arresting my Rosalind's eye. One of these (tacked to a tree

in a path by the lake) I here insert to illustrate the plight to which she had brought me:

"At eve a line of golden light
Hung low along the west;
The first red maple bough shone bright
Upon the woodland's breast.

The wind blew keen across the lake,
A wave mourned on the shore;
Earth knew an instant some heartache
Unknown to earth before.

The wandering ghosts of summers gone
Watched shore and wood and skies;
The night fell like a shadow drawn
Across your violet eyes."

## V

Olive suffered my rhyming with the same composure with which she met the unpreluded passing of a maid of all work, or the ill-natured smoking of the furnace on the first day it was fired. She preferred philosophy to poetry, and borrowed Nietzsche from the branch library. She persuaded me that the ladies of the bungalows are all practical persons, and so far as I

am concerned, Olive fixed the type. It had seemed to me, as I viewed her comings and goings at long range, that she commanded infinite leisure; and yet her hours were crowded with activities. I learned from her that cooks with diplomas are beyond the purses of most bungalow housekeepers; and as Olive's brother's digestive apparatus was most delicate she assumed the responsibility of composing cakes and pastries for his pleasure. With tea (and we indulged in much teaing) she gave me golden sponge-cake of her own making which could not have failed to delight the severest Olympian critic. Her sand tarts established a new standard for that most delectable item of the cook-book. She ironed with her own hands the baby's more fragile frocks. Nor did such manual employments interfere in any way whatever with the delicacy of her touch upon the piano. She confided to me that she made a practice of reviewing French verbs at the ironing-board with a grammar propped before her. She belonged to a club which was studying Carlyle's *French Revolution*, and she was secretary of a musical society—formed exclusively

of the mistresses of bungalows, who had nobly resolved to devote the winter to the study of the works of John Sebastian Bach.

It gradually became clear that the romance of the American bungalow was reinforced and strengthened by a realism that was in itself romance, and I was immensely stimulated by this discovery. It was refreshing to find that there are, after all, no irreconcilable differences between a pie well made and a Chopin polonaise well played. Those who must quibble over the point may file a demurrer, if they so please, with the baby asleep in the perambulator on the nearest bungalow veranda, and the child, awaking, will overrule it with a puckered face and a cry that brings mama on the run with Carlyle in her hand.

## VI

Olive was twenty-five. Twenty-five is the standard age, so to speak, of bungalow matrons. My closest scrutiny has failed to discover one a day older. It is too early for any one to forecast the ultimate fate of the bungalow. The

bungalow speaks for youth, and whether it will survive as an architectural type, or whether those hopeful young married persons who trustingly kindle their domestic altars in bungalow fireplaces will be found there in contentment at fifty, is not for this writing. What did strike me was the fact that Olive, being twenty-five, was an anomaly as a bungalow lady by reason of her unmarriedness. Her domesticity was complete, her efficiency indisputable, her charm ineffable; and it seemed that here was a chance to perfect a type which I, with my strong scientific bent, could not suffer to pass. By the mere process of changing the name on her visiting card, and moving from a brown to a green bungalow, she might become the perfect representation of the most interesting and delightful type of American women. Half of my study of bungalow life was finished, and a publisher to whom I submitted the early chapters returned them immediately with a contract, whose terms were in all ways generous, so that I was able to view the future in that jaunty confidence with which young folk intrust their fate to the bungalow gods.

I looked up from my writing-table, which the chill air had driven indoors, and saw Olive on her lawn engaged in some mysterious occupation. She was whistling the while she dabbed paint with a brush and a sophisticated air upon the bruised legs of the baby's high chair.

At my approach Romance nudged Realism. Or maybe it was Realism that nudged Romance. I cannot see that it makes the slightest difference, one way or another, on whose initiative I spoke: let it suffice that I did speak. Realism and Romance tripped away and left me alone with the situation. When I had spoken Olive rose, viewed her work musingly, with head slightly tilted, and still whistling touched the foot-rest of the baby chair lingeringly with the paint-brush. Those neat cans of prepared paint which place the most fascinating of joys within the range of womankind are in every well-regulated bungalow tool-closet—and another chapter for my book began working in my subconsciousness.

A little later Romance and Realism returned and stood to right and left of us by the living-

room fire. Realism, in the outward form of W. D. H., winked at Romance as represented by R. L. S. I observed that W. D. H., in a pepper-and-salt business suit, played with his eye-glasses; R. L. S., in a velvet jacket, toyed with his dagger hilt.

Olive informed me that her atrabilious brother was about to marry a widow in Emerson Road, so there seemed to be no serious obstacle to the immediate perfecting of Olive as a type by a visit to the young clergyman in the white bungalow in Channing Lane, on the other side of Sherwood Forest Addition. Romance and Realism therefore quietly withdrew and left us to discuss the future.

"I think," said Olive with a far-away look in her eyes, "that there should be a box of geraniums on our veranda rail next summer, and that a hen-house could be built back of the coal shed without spoiling the looks of the yard."

As I saw no objection whatever to these arrangements, we took the baby for a walk, met Tom at the car, and later we all dined together at the brown bungalow. I seem to

recall that there was roast fowl for dinner, a salad with the smoothest of mayonnaise, canned apricots, and chocolate layer cake, and a Schumann programme afterward.

## HOW, THEN, SHOULD SMITH VOTE?
[1920]

THE talk on the veranda had been prolonged, and only my old friend Smith, smoking in meditative silence, had refused to contribute to our discussion of the men and the issues. Between campaigns Smith is open-minded on all matters affecting the body politic. Not infrequently his views are marked by a praiseworthy independence. Smith has brains; Smith thinks. A Republican, he criticises his party with the utmost freedom; and when sorely tried he renounces it with a superb gesture of disdain. But on election day, in a mood of high consecration, he unfailingly casts his ballot for the Republican nominee. A week earlier he may have declared in the most convincing manner that he would not support the ticket; and under extreme provocation I have known him to threaten to leave the Republican fold for all time.

Party loyalty is one of the most powerful factors in the operation of our democracy, and

it has its special psychology, to which only a Josiah Royce could do full justice. Smith really thinks that he will bolt; but when it comes to the scratch an influence against which he is powerless stays his hand when he is alone in the voting booth with his conscience and his God. Later, when gently reminded of this mood of disaffection, he snarls that, when it comes down to brass tacks, any Republican is better than any Democrat, anyhow—a fragment of philosophy that is the consolation of great numbers of Smiths.

Smith, as I was saying, had refrained from participating in our talk on that August night where the saltless sea complained upon the beach and the pines took counsel of the stars. Then, as the party broke up, Smith flung his cigar into Lake Michigan and closed the discussion by remarking with a despairing sigh—

"Well, either way, the people lose!"

## I

Smith prides himself on his ability to get what he wants when he wants it—in everything but politics. In all else that pertains to

his welfare Smith is informed, capable, and efficient. In his own affairs he tells the other fellow where to get off, and if told he can't do a thing he proceeds at once to do it and to do it well. It is only in politics that his efforts are futile and he takes what is "handed him." Under strong provocation he will, in the manner of a dog in the highway, run barking after some vehicle that awakens his ire; but finding himself unequal to the race, he meekly trots back to his own front yard. If the steam roller runs over him and the self-respect is all but mashed out of him, he picks himself up and retires to consider it yet again. He has learned nothing, except that by interposing himself before a machine of superior size and weight he is very likely to get hurt; and this he knew before.

Smith and I are in the north woods thirty-five miles from a telegraph instrument, where it is possible to ponder great questions with a degree of detachment. Loafing with Smith is one of the most profitable things I do; he is the best of fellows, and, as our lives have run parallel from school-days with an unbroken

intimacy, we are thoroughly familiar with each other's manner of thought. What I am setting down here is really a condensed report of our talks. Just where Smith leaves off and I begin doesn't matter, for we speak the same language of the Ancient Brotherhood of the Average Man. Smith is a Republican; I am a Democrat. We have "gone to the mat" in many campaigns, each valiantly defending his party and its heroes. But, chumming together in August, 1920, the punch had gone out of us. We talked of men and issues, but not with our old fervor. At first we were both shy of present-day matters, and disposed to "sidle up" to the immediate situation—to reach it by reluctant, tangential approaches, as though we were strangers, wary of wounding each other's feelings.

We mean to keep smiling about this whole business. We Americans seem destined to rock dizzily on the brink of many precipices without ever quite toppling over. We have lived through wars and rumors of wars, and have escaped pestilence and famine, and we are deeply grateful that the present campaign lays so light a tax upon the emotions. The republic isn't go-

ing to perish, no matter who's elected. One thing is certain, however, and that is that this time we—that is, Smith and I—are not going to be jostled or pushed.

The other day we interviewed an Indian—whether untaxed or enrolled at the receipt of custom we didn't ascertain. Smith asked him whether he was for Cox or Harding, and the rightful heir to all the territory in sight, interpreting our courteous inquiry in a restricted tribal rather than a national spirit replied, "No whisk." He thought we were deputy sheriffs looking for boot-leggers. Even at that, Smith held "no whisk" to be the most intelligent answer he had as yet received to his question.

Smith nearly upset the canoe one morning as he turned suddenly to demand fiercely: "What's this campaign all about anyhow?" This was a dismaying question, but it precipitated a fortnight of reminiscences of the changing fortunes of parties and of battles long ago, with the usual profitless palaver as to whether the giants of other days were really bigger and nobler than those of the present.

We decided, of course, that they were, having arrived at that time of life when pygmies loom large in the twilight shades of vanishing perspectives. The recuperative power of parties kept us interested through several evenings. It seemed a miracle that the Democratic party survived the Civil War. We talked much of Cleveland, speaking of him wistfully, as the habit now is—of his courage and bluff honesty.

In generous mood we agreed that Mr. Bryan had at times rendered meritorious service to his country, and that it was a good thing to encourage such evangelists occasionally to give the kettle a vigorous stirring up. The brilliant qualities as well as the many irritating characteristics of Colonel Roosevelt were dwelt upon, and we readily and amiably concluded that many pages of American history would be dull without him. He knew what America is all about, and that is something. We lamented the disheartening circumstance that in the very nature of our system of political management there must always be men of first-rate capacity who can never hope to win the highest place—men, for example, of indubitable wis-

dom, character, and genius, like George F. Edmunds, Elihu Root, and Judge Gray of Delaware.

"When I've got a place to fill in my business," said Smith, "I pick out a man I'm dead sure can handle it; I can't afford to experiment with fakers and amateurs. But when it comes to choosing a mayor in my town or a President of the United States, I've got to take what I can get."

There is no justification for the party system, unless the major parties are alert and honest in criticism and exercise a restraining influence upon each other. It is perfectly legitimate for the opposition to pick out all the weak spots in the record of an administration and make the most of them. The rules of good sportsmanship do not, unfortunately, apply in politics. With all our insistence as a nation upon fair play, we don't practise our greatest game in that spirit. It was not, I should say, until after Mr. Cleveland's second election that the Civil War ceased to color political discussion. Until I was well on toward manhood, I was troubled not a little by a fear that

the South would renew the war, so continually was the great struggle of the sixties brought fearsomely to the attention, even in local contests. In the criticism that has been heaped upon Mr. Wilson's administration we have been reminded frequently that he has been far too responsive to Southern influence.

The violence of our partisanship is responsible for the intrusion of all manner of extraneous matters into campaigns. It would seem that some single striking issue that touches the pocketbook, like the tariff or silver, is necessary, if the electorate is to be thoroughly aroused. Human nature in a democracy is quite what it is under any other form of government, and is thoroughly disposed to view all matters selfishly. Shantung and Fiume are too remote to interest the great number of us whose club is the corner grocery. Anything beyond Main Street is alien to our interest. We'll buy food for the starving in other lands, but that's missionary work, not politics. Politics is electing our township ticket, even though Bill Jones does beat his wife and is bound to make a poor constable.

We became slightly cynical at times, in the way of Americans who talk politics heart-to-heart. The national convention, where there is a thrill in the sonority of the very names of the far-flung commonwealths as they are recited on roll-call, is, on the face of it, a glorious expression of democracy at work. But in actual operation every one knows that a national convention is only nominally representative. The delegates in their appointed places are not free and independent American citizens, assembled, as we would believe, to exercise their best judgment as trustees of the "folks back home." Most of them owe their seats to the favor of a district or State boss; from the moment the convention opens they are the playthings of the super-bosses, who plan in advance every step in the proceedings.

Occasionally there are slips: the ringmaster cracks his whip, confident that the show will proceed according to programme, only to be embarrassed by some irresponsible performer who refuses to "take" the hoops and hurdles in the prescribed order. In other terms, some absurd person may throw a wrench into a per-

fectly functioning machine and change the pattern it has been set to weave. Such sabotage calls for a high degree of temerariousness, and cannot be recommended to ambitious young patriots anxious to ingratiate themselves with the powers that control. At Baltimore, in 1912, Mr. Bryan did the trick—the most creditable act of his career; but in accepting for his reward the premiership for which he was so conspicuously unfit he foolishly spoiled his record and promptly fulfilled the worst predictions of his enemies.

There is an oft-quoted saying that the Democratic party always may be relied upon to do the wrong thing. Dating from 1876, when it so nearly won the presidency, it has certainly been the victim of a great deal of bad luck. However, remembering the blasting of many Republican hopes and the swift passing of many Republican idols—the catastrophe that befell the much-enduring Blaine, Mr. Taft's melancholy adventures with the presidency, the Progressive schism, and the manner in which Mr. Hughes struck out with the bases full—it may hardly be said that the gods of good-for-

tune have been markedly faithful to the Republicans. Disappointments are inevitable; but even the Grant third-termers and the followers of the Plumed Knight and the loyal Bryan phalanx outlived their sorrows. The supporters of McAdoo and Palmer, of Wood and Lowden, appear to be comfortably seated on the band-wagon.

Smith was an ardent supporter of General Wood's candidacy, and we sat together in the gallery of the convention hall at Chicago and observed with awe and admiration the manner in which the general received the lethal thrust. The noisy demonstrations, the oratory, the vociferous whoops of the galleries touched us not at all, for we are not without our sophistication in such exhibitions. We listened with pleasure to the impromptus of those stanch veterans of many battles, Messrs. Depew and Cannon. At other times, during lulls that invited oratory, we heard insistent calls for Mr. Beveridge; but these did not reach the ear, or failed to touch the heart, of the chairman. The former senator from Indiana had been a Progressive, and was not to be trusted before a convention that

might, with a little stimulation, have trampled the senatorial programme under foot.

We knew before the opening prayer was uttered that, when the delegates chose a candidate, it would be only a *pro forma* confirmation of a selection made privately by half a dozen men, devout exponents of that principle of party management which holds that the wisdom of the few is superior to the silly clamor of the many. At that strategic moment when it became hazardous to indulge the deadlock further, and expediency called for an adjournment that the scene might be set for the last act, the great lords quite shamelessly consulted in full view of the spectators. Messrs. Lodge, Smoot, Watson, and Crane, hastily reinforced by Mr. Herrick, who, aware that the spotlight was soon to be turned upon Ohio, ran nimbly across the reporters' seats to join the conference, stood there in their majesty, like complacent Olympians preparing to confer a boon upon mankind. It was a pretty bit of drama. The curtain fell, as upon a second act where the developments of the third are fully anticipated and interest is buoyed up only through

the intermission by a mild curiosity as to the manner in which the plot will be worked out.

My heart warmed to the enterprising reporter who attached himself to the sacred group for a magnificent moment. His forcible ejection only emphasized the tensity of the situation and brought into clearer relief the august figures of the pontiffs, who naturally resented so gross an intrusion upon their privacy.

## II

The other night, when every prospect divulged by the moon's soft radiance was pleasing and only the thought of man's clumsy handiwork was vile, Smith shocked me by remarking:

"This patter of both parties about the dear people makes me sick. That vox populi vox Dei stuff was always a fake. We think we're hearing an echo from heaven when it's only a few bosses in the back room of a hotel somewhere telling us what we ought to want." We descanted upon this at length, and he adduced much evidence in support of his contention.

"What we've got in this country," he snorted, when I tried to reason him out of his impious attitude, "is government of the people by the bosses—for the bosses' good. The people are like a flock of silly sheep fattening for the wolf, and too stupid to lift their eyes from the grass to see him galloping down the hill. They've got to be driven to the hole in the wall and pushed through!"

He was mightily pleased when I told him he had been anticipated by many eminent authorities running back to Isaiah and Plato.

"Saving remnant" was a phrase to his liking, and he kept turning it over and investing it with modern meanings. Before we blew out the candles we were in accord on the proposition that while we have government by parties the parties have got to be run by some one; what is everybody's business being, very truly, nobody's business. Hence the development of party organizations and their domination by groups, with the groups themselves deriving inspiration usually from a single head. Under the soothing influence of these bromides Smith fell to sleep denouncing the direct primary.

"Instead of giving the power to the people," he muttered drowsily, "the bloomin' thing has commercialized office-seeking. We're selling nominations to the highest bidder. If I were ass enough to chase a United States senatorship, I wouldn't waste any time on the people until I'd been underwritten by a few strong banks. And if I won, I'd be like the Dutchman who said he was getting along all right, only he was worried because he had to die and go to hell yet. It would be my luck to be pinched as a common felon, and to have my toga changed for a prison suit at Leavenworth."

Some candidate for the doctorate, hard put for a subject, might find it profitable to produce a thesis on American political phraseology. As a people we are much addicted to felicitous combinations of words that express large ideas in the smallest possible compass. Not only does political wisdom lend itself well to condensation, but the silliest fallacy will carry far if knocked into a fetching phrase. How rich in its connotations even to-day is the old slogan, "Tippecanoe and Tyler too"! and many others equally illuminative of a period might be dug

out of the records from the beginning of our history, including "the tariff is a tax," "the full dinner-pail," down to "he kept us out of war." A telling phrase or a catchword is enormously persuasive and convincing—the shrewdest possible advertisement.

There is no way of knowing how many of our hundred millions ever read a national platform, but I will hazard the guess that not more than twenty-five per cent have perused the platforms of 1920 or will do so before election day. The average voter is content to accept the interpretations and laudatory comment of his party paper, with its assurance that the declaration of principles and purposes is in keeping with the great traditions of the grand old party. It is straining Smith's patriotism pretty far to ask him to read a solid page of small type, particularly when he knows that much of it is untrue and most of it sheer bunk. Editorial writers and campaign orators read platforms perforce; but to Smith they are fatiguing to the eye and a weariness to the spirit. The primary qualification for membership on a platform committee is an utter lack

—there must be no question about it—of a sense of humor. The League of Nations plank of the Republican platform is a refutation of the fallacy that we are a people singularly blessed with humor. We could ask no more striking proof of the hypnotic power of a party name than the acceptance of this plank, solemnly sawed, trimmed, and painted red, white, and blue, in the committe-room, and received by the delegates with joyous acclamation.

## III

The embarrassments of the partisan who is challenged to explain the faith that is in him are greatly multiplied in this year of grace. Considerable literature is available as to the rise and development of the two major parties, but a student might exhaust the whole of it and yet read the Chicago and San Francisco platforms as through a glass darkly. There is a good deal of Jeffersonian democracy that is extremely difficult to reconcile with many acts of Mr. Wilson. The partisan who tries to square his Democracy or his Republicanism with the

faith he inherited from his grandfather is doomed to a severe headache. The rope that separates the elephant from the donkey in the menagerie marks only a nominal difference in species: they eat the same fodder and, when the spectator's back is turned, slyly wink at each other. There is a fine ring to the phrase "a loyal Republican" or "a loyal Democrat," but we have reached a point of convergence where loyalty is largely a matter of tradition and superstition. What Jefferson said on a given point, or what Hamilton thought about something else, avails little to a Democrat or a Republican in these changed times. We talk blithely of fundamental principles, but are still without the power to visualize the leaders of the past in newly developed situations of which they never dreamed. To attempt to interview Washington as to whether he intended his warning against entangling alliances to apply to a League of Nations to insure the peace of the world is ridiculous; as well invoke Julius Cæsar's opinion of present-day questions of Italian politics.

Delightful and inspiring as it would doubt-

less be, we can't quite trust the government to the counsels of the ouija-board. The seats of the cabinet or of the supreme bench will hardly be filled with table-rapping experts until more of us are satisfied of the authenticity of the communications that purport to be post-marked oblivion. We quote the great spirits of the past only when we need them to give weight and dignity to our own views. (Incidentally, a ouija-board opinion from John Marshall as to the propriety of tacking a police regulation like the Eighteenth Amendment to the Federal Constitution would be first-page stuff for the newspapers.)

Monroe was luckier than most of our patriarchs. The doctrine associated with his name is jealously treasured by many patriotic Americans who haven't the slightest idea of the circumstances that called it forth; but to mention it in a discussion of international affairs is to stamp the speaker as a person of breeding, endowed with intellectual gifts of the highest order. If by some post-mortem referendum we could "call up" Monroe to explain just how far America might safely go in the defense of

his doctrine, and whether it could be advantageously extended beyond the baths of all the western stars to keep pace with such an expansion as that represented by the Philippines, we might profit by his answer—and again, we might not.

We can't shirk our responsibilities. One generation can't do the work of another. In the last analysis we've got to stand on our own feet and do our own thinking. The Constitution itself has to be interpreted over and over again, and even amended occasionally; for the world does, in spite of all efforts to stop it, continue to move right along. This is not a year in which either of the major parties can safely harp upon its "traditional policy." There are skeletons in both closets that would run like frightened rabbits if dragged into the light and ordered to solve the riddles of 1920.

The critics of President Wilson have dwelt much on the vision of the founders, without conceding that he too may be blessed with a seer's vision and the tongue of prophecy. To his weaknesses as a leader I shall revert later; but his high-mindedness and earnest desire to

serve the nation and the world are questioned only by the most buckramed hostile partisan, or by those who view the present only through the eyes of dead men.

## IV

When President Wilson read his war message to the Congress it must have been in the minds of many thousands who thrilled to the news that night, that a trinity of great American presidents was about to be completed; that a niche awaited Mr. Wilson in the same alcove with Washington and Lincoln. Many who were impatient and restless under the long correspondence with the Imperial German Government were willing to acknowledge that the delay was justified; that at last the nation was solidly behind the administration; that amid the stirring call of trumpets partisanship would be forgotten; and that, when the world was made safe for law and decency, Mr. Wilson would find himself in the enjoyment of an unparalleled popularity. It did not seem possible that he could fail. That he did fail of these

hopes and expectations is not a matter that any true lover of America can contemplate with jubilation. Those of us who ask the greatest and the best things of and for America can hardly be gratified by any failure that might be construed as a sign of weakness in democracy. But Mr. Wilson's inability to hold the confidence of the people, to win his adversaries to his standard, to implant himself in the affections of the mass, cannot be attributed to anything in our political system but wholly to his own nature. It is one of the ironies of our political life that a man like Mr. McKinley, without distinguished courage, originality, or constructive genius, is able, through the possession of minor qualities that are social rather than political, to endear himself to the great body of his countrymen. It may be, after all our prayers for great men, that negative rather than positive qualities are the safest attributes of a President.

It may fairly be said that Mr. Wilson is intellectually the equal of most of his predecessors in the presidency, and the superior of a very considerable number of them. The very con-

sciousness of the perfect functioning of his own mental machinery made him intolerant of stupidity, and impatient of the criticism of those with whom it has been necessary for him to do his work, who have, so to put it, only asked to be "shown." If the disagreeable business of working in practical politics in all its primary branches serves no better purpose, it at least exercises a humanizing effect; it is one way of learning that men must be reasoned with and led, not driven. In escaping the usual political apprenticeship, Mr. Wilson missed wholly the liberalizing and broadening contacts common to the practical politician. At times—for example, when the Adamson Law was passed—I heard Republicans, with unflattering intonation, call him the shrewdest politician of his time; but nothing could be farther from the truth. Nominally the head of his party, and with its future prosperity in his hands, he has shown a curious indifference to the maintenance of its morale.

"Produce great men; the rest follows." The production of great men is not so easy as Whitman imagined; but in eight tremendous years

we must ruefully confess that no new and commanding figure has risen in either branch of Congress. Partisanship constantly to the fore, but few manifestations of statesmanship: such is the record. It is well-nigh unbelievable that, where the issues have so constantly touched the very life of the nation, the discussions could have been so marked by narrowness and bigotry. The exercise of autocratic power by a group pursuing a policy of frustration and obstruction is as little in keeping with the spirit of our institutions as a stubborn, uncompromising course on the part of the executive. The conduct of the Republican majority in the Senate is nothing of which their party can be proud.

Four years ago I published some reflections on the low state to which the public service had fallen, and my views have not been changed by more recent history. It would be manifestly unfair to lay at Mr. Wilson's door the inferiority of the men elected to the Congress; but with all the potentialities of party leadership and his singular felicity of appeal, he has done little to quicken the public conscience with respect to the

choice of administrators or representatives. It may be said in his defense that his hours from the beginning were too crowded to permit such excursions in political education; but we had a right to expect him to lend the weight of his authoritative voice and example to the elevation of the tone of the public service. Poise and serenity of temper we admire, but not to the point where it seemingly vanishes into indifference and a callousness to criticism. The appeal two years ago for a Democratic Congress, that the nation's arm might be strengthened for the prosecution of the war, was a gratuitous slap at the Republican representatives who had supported his war policies, and an affront to the public intelligence, that met with just rebuke. The cavalier discharge of Lansing and the retention of Burleson show an equally curious inability to grasp public opinion.

## V

The whole handling of the League of Nations was bungled, as most of the Democrats I know privately admit. The end of a war that

had shaken the very foundations of the earth was a fitting time to attempt the formation of an association of the great powers to enforce the peaceful settlement of international disputes. Here was a matter that spoke powerfully to the conscience and the imagination, and in the chastened mood of a war-weary world it seemed a thing possible of achievement. Certainly, in so far as America was concerned, it was a project to be approached in such manner that its success could in no way be jeopardized by partisanship. The possibility of opposition by Democratic senators, the hostility of Republican senators, which was not merely partisan but in certain quarters tinged with bitter personal hatred of the President, was to be anticipated and minimized.

The President's two trips abroad were a mistake, at least in that they encouraged those of his critics who assailed him as an autocrat and supreme egotist stubbornly bent upon doing the whole business in his own way. The nation was entitled to the services in the peace negotiations of its best talent—men strongly established in public confidence. Mr. Wilson

paid dearly for his inability to recognize this. His own appearance at Versailles conveyed a false impression of his powers, and the effect at home was to cause uneasiness among many who had most cordially supported him.

The hovering figure of Colonel House has been a constant irritation to a public uninformed as to the training or experience that set him apart for preferment. In sending from the homebound ship an invitation to the august Foreign Relations committee to gather at the White House at an hour appointed and hear the good news that a league was in prospect, the President once more displayed a lamentable ignorance of human nature. His attitude was a trifle too much like that of a parent returning from a journey and piquing the curiosity of his household by a message conveying the glad tidings that he was bringing presents for their delight. There are one hundred millions of us, and we are not to be managed in this way.

Colonel Roosevelt might have done precisely these things and "got away with it." Many thousands would have said it was just like him, and applauded. The effect of Mr. Wilson's

course was to precipitate a prolonged battle over the league and leave it high in the air. It hovers over the present campaign like a toy balloon floating within reach of languid and indifferent spectators. In that part of the country with whose feelings and temper on public matters I may pretend to some knowledge, I do not believe that any one cares greatly about it. The moment it became a partisan question, it lost its vitality as a moral issue that promised peace and security to America and all the world. Our attitude with respect to the league has added nothing to the nation's dignity; rather, by our wabbly course in this matter we have done much to weaken the case for world democracy. Its early acceptance, with reservations that would have stilled the cry of denationalization, would have made it an achievement on which the Democratic party might have gone to the people with satisfaction and confidence. Even considered as an experiment of dubious practicability, it would have been defensible at least as an honest attempt to blunt the sword of the war god. The spirit in which we associated ourselves with the other

powers that resisted the Kaiser's attempt to bestride the world like a Colossus needed for its complete expression the further effort to make a repetition of the gigantic struggle impossible.

As a people we are strongly aroused and our imagination quickened by anything that may be viewed in a glow of spirituality; and a scheme of peace insurance already in operation would have proved a dangerous thing to attack. But the league's moral and spiritual aspects have been marred or lost. The patience of the people has been exhausted by the long debate about it, and the pettiness and insincerity, the contemptible evasion and hair-splitting, that have marked the controversy over what is, in its purpose and aim, a crystallization of the hope of mankind in all the ages. Such a league might fail; certainly its chance of success is vastly decreased by America's refusal to participate.

## VI

In the cool airs of the North Smith and I have honestly tried to reduce the league situa-

tion to intelligible terms. Those voters who may feel constrained to regard the election as a referendum of the league will do well to follow our example in pondering the speeches of acceptance of the two candidates. Before these words are read both Governor Cox and Senator Harding will doubtless have amplified their original statements, but these are hardly susceptible of misinterpretation as they stand. Mr. Harding's utterance is in effect a motion to lay on the table, to defer action to a more convenient season, and take it up *de novo*. Governor Cox, pledging his support to the proposition, calls for the question. Mr. Harding defines his position thus:

With a Senate advising, as the Constitution contemplates, I would hopefully approach the nations of Europe and of the earth, proposing that understanding which makes us a willing participant in the consecration of nations to a new relationship, to commit the moral forces of the world, America included, to peace and international justice, still leaving America free, independent, and self-reliant, but offering friendship to all the world.

If men call for more specific details, I remind them that moral committals are broad and all-inclusive, and we are contemplating peoples in the concord of humanity's

advancement. From our own view-point the programme is specifically American, and we mean to be American first, to all the world.

Mr. Cox says, "I favor going in"; and meets squarely the criticism that the Democratic platform is not explicit as to reservations. He would "state our interpretations of the Covenant as a matter of good faith to our associates and as a precaution against any misunderstanding in the future," and quotes from an article of his own, published in the New York *Times* before his nomination, these words:

In giving its assent to this treaty, the Senate has in mind the fact that the League of Nations which it embodies was devised for the sole purpose of maintaining peace and comity among the nations of the earth and preventing the recurrence of such destructive conflicts as that through which the world has just passed. The co-operation of the United States with the league, and its continuance as a member thereof, will naturally depend upon the adherence of the league to that fundamental purpose.

He proposes an addition to the Covenant of some such paragraph as this:

It will, of course, be understood that, in carrying out the purpose of the league, the government of the United

States must at all times act in strict harmony with the terms and intent of the United States Constitution, which cannot in any way be altered by the treaty-making power.

There is no echo here of the President's uncompromising declaration that the Covenant must be accepted precisely as he presented it. To the lay mind there is no discernible difference between a reservation and an interpretation, when the sole purpose in either case would be to make it clear to the other signatories, through the text of the instrument itself, that we could bind ourselves in no manner that transcended the Constitution.

Smith is endowed with a talent for condensation, and I cheerfully quote the result of his cogitations on the platforms and the speeches of the candidates. "The Republican senators screamed for reservations, but when Hiram Johnson showed symptoms of kicking out of the traces they pretended that they never wanted the league at all. But to save their faces they said maybe some time when the sky was high and they were feeling good they would shuffle the deck and try a new deal. Cox is for playing the game right through on the present layout.

If you're keen for the League of Nations, your best chance of ever seeing America sign up is to stand on Cox's side of the table."

Other Smiths, not satisfied with his analysis, and groping in the dark, may be grateful for the leading hand of Mr. Taft. The former President was, in his own words, "one of the small group who, in 1915, began the movement in this country for the League of Nations and the participation of the United States therein." Continuing, he said, in the Philadelphia *Ledger* of August 1:

> Had I been in the Senate, I would have voted for the league and treaty as submitted; and I advocated its ratification accordingly. I did not think and do not now think that anything in the League Covenant as sent to the Senate would violate the Constitution of the United States, or would involve us in wars which it would not be to the highest interest of the world and this country to suppress by universal boycott and, if need be, by military force.

In response to a question whether, this being his feeling, he would not support Mr. Cox, Mr. Taft made this reply:

> No such issue as the ratification of the League of Nations as submitted can possibly be settled in the coming

election. Only one-third of the Senate is to be elected, and but fifteen Republican senators out of forty-nine can be changed. There remain in the Senate, whatever the result of the election, thirty-three Republicans who have twice voted against the ratification of the league without the Lodge reservations. Of the fifteen retiring Republicans, many are certain of re-election. Thirty-three votes will defeat the league.

Smith, placidly fishing, made the point that a man who believed in a thing would vote for it even though it was a sure loser, and asked where a Democratic landslide would leave Mr. Taft. When I reminded him that he had drifted out of the pellucid waters of political discussion and snagged the boat on a moral question, he became peevish and refused to fish any more that day.

The league is the paramount issue, or it is not; you can take it, or leave it alone. The situation may be wholly changed when Mr. Root, to whom the Republican league plank is attributed, reports the result of his labors in organizing the international court of arbitration. Some new proposal for an association of nations to promote or enforce peace would

be of undoubted benefit to the Republicans in case they find their negative position difficult to maintain.

The platforms and speeches of acceptance present, as to other matters, nothing over which neighbors need quarrel. As to retrenchment, labor, taxation, and other questions of immediate and grave concern, the promises of both candidates are fair enough. They both clearly realize that we have entered upon a period that is likely to witness a strong pressure for modifications of our social and political structure. Radical sentiment has been encouraged, or at least tolerated, in a disturbing degree by the present administration. However, there is nothing in Mr. Cox's record as governor or in his expressed views to sustain any suspicion that he would temporize with the forces of destruction. The business of democracy is to build, not to destroy; to help, not to hinder. We have from both candidates much the same assurances of sympathy with the position held nowadays by all straight-thinking men —that industrial peace, concord, and contentment can be maintained only by fair deal-

ing and good-will among all of us for the good of all.

From their public utterances and other testimony we are not convinced that either candidate foreshadows a stalwart Saul striding across the hills on his way to the leadership of Israel. Mr. Harding shows more poise—more caution and timidity, if you will; Mr. Cox is a more alert and forthright figure, far likelier to strike "straight at the grinning Teeth of Things." He is also distinctly less careful of his speech. He reminds the Republicans that "McKinley broke the fetters of our boundary lines, spoke of the freedom of Cuba, and carried the torch of American idealism to the benighted Philippines"—a proud boast that must have pained Mr. Bryan. In the same paragraph of his speech of acceptance we are told that "Lincoln fought a war on the purely moral question of slavery"—a statement that must ring oddly in the ears of Southerners brought up in the belief that the South fought in defense of State sovereignty. These may not be inadvertences, but a courageous brushing away of old litter; he is entitled to the benefit of the doubt.

## VII

Smith rose from his morning dip with the joyful countenance of a diver who has found a rare pearl. We were making progress, he said; he thought he had got hold of what he called the God's truth of the whole business. What those fellows did at Chicago and San Francisco was to cut the barbed-wire entanglements in No Man's Land, so that it doesn't make much difference on which side of the battle-line we find ourselves on election day. The parties have unwittingly flung a challenge to the independent voter. An extraordinary opportunity is presented to citizens everywhere to scrutinize with unusual care their local tickets and vote for the candidates who promise the best service. As Smith put it, we ought to be able to scramble things a good deal. Keep the bosses guessing: this he offered as a good slogan for the whole Smith family. In our own Indiana we would pick and choose, registering, of course, our disapproval of Senator Watson as a post-graduate of the Penrose school, and voting for a Democrat for governor because Governor

Goodrich's administration has been a continuous vaudeville of error and confusion, and the Democratic candidate, a gentleman heretofore unknown in politics, talks common sense in folksy language.

We finally concluded as to the presidency that it came down to a choice of men tested by their experience, public acts, and the influences behind them. The imperative demand is for an efficient administration of the federal government. The jobs must be given to big men of demonstrated capacity. Undoubtedly Mr. Harding would have a larger and more promising field to draw upon. If it were possible for Mr. Cox to break a precedent and state with the frankness of which he seems capable the order of men he would assemble for his counsellors and administrators, he would quiet an apprehension that is foremost in the minds of an innumerable company of hesitating voters. Fear of continuance of Mr. Wilson's indulgent policy toward mediocrity and a repetition of his refusal to seek the best help the nation offered (until compelled to call upon the expert dollar-a-year man to meet the exigen-

cies of war) is not a negligible factor in this campaign, and Mr. Cox, if he is wise, will not ignore it.

The manner of Mr. Harding's nomination by the senatorial cabal, whose influence upon his administration is hardly a speculative matter, invites the consideration of progressive Republicans who rankle under two defeats fairly chargeable to reactionary domination. It was apparent at Chicago that the Old Guard had learned nothing and would risk a third consecutive defeat rather than accept any candidate not of their choosing. Mr. Harding's emphasis upon his belief in party government, as distinguished from personal government—obviously a slap at Mr. Wilson—is susceptible of an unfortunate interpretation, as Mr. Cox was quick to see. If the Republican candidate means submission to organization chiefs, or to such a group as now controls the Senate and the party, his declaration is not reassuring.

If Smith, in his new mood of independence, votes for Mr. Cox, and I, not a little bitter that my party in these eight years has failed to meet my hopes for it, vote for Mr. Harding,

which of us, I wonder, will the better serve America?

With renewed faith and hope we packed our belongings and made ready for our return to the world of men. Having settled the nation's affairs, and being on good terms with our consciences, we turned for a last look at the camp before embarking. Smith took the platforms and the speeches of acceptance of the candidates for President and Vice-President of the United States, affixed them firmly to a stone, and consigned them without ceremony to the deep. The fish had been naughty, he said, and he wanted to punish them for their bad manners.

# THE POOR OLD ENGLISH LANGUAGE

IN the whole range of human endeavor no department is so hospitable to the amateur as education. Here the gates are always open. Wide is the field and many are the fools who disport therein.

Politics we are all too prone to forget between campaigns; literature and the graphic arts engage only our languid attention and science interests us only when our imaginations are mightily stirred. But we all know how the young idea should be taught to shoot. We are either reactionaries, lamenting the good old times of the three *r's* and the little red schoolhouse, or we discuss with much gravity such weighty problems as the extension or curtailment of the elective system, or we fly to the defense or demolition of the ideas of Dewey and other reformers. It is folly not to hold opinions where no one is sure of anything and every one is free to strut in the silken robes of wisdom. Many of us receive at times flattering invitations to express opinions touching the

education of our youth. Though my own schooling was concluded at the algebra age, owing to an inherent inability to master that subject or even comprehend what it was all about, I have not scrupled to contribute to educational symposia at every opportunity. Perhaps I answer the riddles of the earnest critics of education the more cheerfully from the very fact of my benightedness. When the doors are closed and the potent, grave, and reverend signiors go into committee of the whole to determine why education does not indeed educate—there, in such a company, I am not only an eager listener but, with the slightest encouragement, I announce and defend my opinions.

Millions are expended every year for the public enlightenment, and yet no one is satisfied either with the method or the result. Some one is always trying to do something for culture. It seems at times that the efforts of the women of America to increase the remnant that is amiably disposed toward sweetness and light cannot fail, so many and so zealous are the organizations in which they band themselves for this laudable purpose. A little while

ago we had a nation-wide better-English week to encourage respect among the youth of this jazzy age for the poor old English language.

I shall express without apology my opinion that in these free States we are making no marked headway in the attempt to improve spoken or written English. Hardly a day passes that I do not hear graduates of colleges confuse their pronouns; evil usages are as common as the newspapers. And yet grammar and rhetoric are taught more or less intelligently by a vast army of overworked and underpaid teachers, according to the text-books fashioned by specialists who really do try to make themselves intelligible.

My attitude toward this whole perplexing business is one of the greatest tolerance. I doubt seriously whether I could pass an examination in English grammar. A Japanese waiter in a club in my town used to lie in wait for me, when I visited the house at odd hours in search of seclusion, for the purpose of questioning me as to certain perplexing problems in grammar. He had flatteringly chosen me from the club roster as a lettered person, and it was with

astonishment that he heard my embarrassed confession that I shared his bewilderment. To any expert grammarians who, inspired by this revelation, begin a laborious investigation of these pages in pursuit of errors, I can only say that I wish them good luck in their adventure. At times I do manifestly stumble, and occasionally the blunder is grievous. A poem of my authorship once appeared in a periodical of the most exacting standards with a singular noun mated to a plural verb. For proof-readers as a class I entertain the greatest veneration. Often a query courteously noted on the margin of a galley has prevented a violence to my mother tongue which I would not consciously inflict upon it.

To add to the fury of the grammar hounds, I will state that at times in my life I have been able to read Greek, Latin, Italian, and French without ever knowing anything about the grammar of either of these languages beyond what I worked out for myself as I went along. This method or lack of method is not, I believe, original with me, for there are, or have been, inductive methods of teaching foreign

languages which set the student at once to reading and made something rather incidental of the grammar. This is precisely what I should do with English if I were responsible for the instruction of children at the age when it is the fashion to begin hammering grammar into their inhospitable minds. Ignorant of grammar myself, but having—if I may assume so much—an intuitive sense of the proper and effective manner of shaping sentences, there would be no text-books in my schoolroom. All principals, trustees, inspectors, and educational reformers would be excluded from my classes, and I should insist on protection from physical manifestations of their indignation on my way to and from the schoolhouse. The first weeks of my course would be purely conversational. I should test the students for their vulgarities and infelicities, and such instances, registered on the blackboard, would visualize the errors as long as necessary. The reading of indubitably good texts in class would, of course, be part of the programme, and the Bible I should use freely, particularly drawing upon the Old Testament narratives.

I should endeavor to make it appear that clean and accurate speech is a part of good manners, an important item in the general equipment for life. When it came to writing, I should begin with the familiar letter, leaving the choice of subject to the student. These compositions, read in the class, would be criticised, as far as possible, by the students themselves. I should efface myself completely as an instructor and establish the relation of a fellow-seeker intent upon finding the best way of saying a thing. If there were usages that appeared to be common to a neighborhood, or intrusions of dialect peculiar to a State or a section, I might search out and describe their origin, but if they were flavorsome and truly of the soil I should not discourage their use. Self-consciousness in these early years is to be avoided. The weaknesses of the individual student are only discernible where he is permitted to speak and write without timidity.

When a youngster is made to understand from a concrete example that a sentence is badly constructed, or that it is marred by a

weak word or a word used out of its true sense, the rules governing such instances may be brought to his attention with every confidence that he will understand their point. My work would be merely a preparation for the teaching of grammar, if grammar there must be; but I should resent such instruction if my successor failed to relate my work to his.

I consider the memorizing of short passages of verse and prose an important adjunct to the teaching of English by any method. "Learn it by heart" seems to have gone out of fashion in late years. I have recently sat in classes and listened to the listless reading, paragraph by paragraph, of time-honored classics, knowing well that the students were getting nothing out of them. The more good English the student carries in his head the likelier he is to gain a respect for his language and a confidence and effectiveness in speaking and writing it.

Let the example precede the rule! If there is any sense in the rule the example will clarify it; if it is without justification and designed merely to befuddle the student, then it ought to be abolished anyhow. The idea that chil-

dren should be seen and not heard belongs to the period when it was believed that to spare the rod was to spoil the child. Children should be encouraged to talk, to observe and to describe the things that interest them in the course of the day. In this way they will form the habit of the intelligent reporter who, on the way to his desk from an assignment, plans his article, eager to find the best way of telling his story. Instead of making a hateful mystery of English speech it should be made the most natural thing in the world, worthy of the effort necessary to give it accuracy, ease, and charm.

The scraps of conversation I overhear everyday in elevators, across counters, on the street, and in trolley-cars are of a nature to disturb those who view with complacency the great treasure we pour into education. The trouble with our English is that too much is taught and not enough is learned. The child is stuffed, not fed. Rules crammed into him for his guidance in self-expression are imperfectly assimilated. They never become a part of him. His first contacts with grammar arouse his hostility,

and seeing no sense in it he casts it aside with the disdain he would manifest for a mechanical toy that refused to work in the manner promised by the advertisement.



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